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## **"Ask and you shall be given": Pentecostalism and the economic crisis in Cameroon**

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“Ask and you shall be given”:  
Pentecostalism and the economic crisis in Cameroon

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# “Ask and you shall be given”

Pentecostalism and the  
economic crisis in Cameroon

Robert Mbe Akoko

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## Introduction

This book consists of five published articles and a general introduction. The articles concern recent changes within Pentecostalist and other churches in Southwest Cameroon. A central theme is the transition - in this area in the 1980's - from what I term 'classical' to 'modern' Pentecostalism: that is, from a Gospel of asceticism on the earth in order to gain spiritual riches and blessing in the after-life, to a celebration of accumulation of wealth already in this world. In Cameroon – as elsewhere in Africa -, this fairly abrupt transition coincided with the onset of an economic crisis that is lasting up till the present day and which brought general impoverishment, next to the enrichment of the happy few.

This theme of a switch from asceticism to accumulation touches upon two related themes that emerged during my field-work and are dealt with in the articles below as well. First of all, the theme of what I propose to call the 'pentecostalization' of older and more established churches. In this area, notably the Presbyterians and the Catholics seem, after initial hesitations, prepared to take over some of the Pentecostal rituals, apparently in the hope that they will thus counter the spectacular growth of the Pentecostal movement in the area. A second, related theme that posed itself with some urgency during my field-work concerns the differences between these older churches and the Pentecostal congregations in their political stance. The mainline churches proved to be more prepared - just as elsewhere in Africa – to denounce certain abuses following from the present political situation. This raised the question why the political stance of Pentecostal churches was fairly different.

In this introduction I propose to place these subjects in a broader historical and socio-political context, and also to indicate how the five articles below relate to

each other. Subsequently I will discuss the relevance of current debates on the rapid rise of Pentecostalism in Africa and elsewhere for my research. A central question is here on which aspects these more general debates offer seminal starting points for my research in Southwest Cameroon. Finally I will report on my field-work and the choices I had to make in the course of my study. This introduction will conclude with a rapid overview of the five articles that form the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

## Explaining the central theme: From asceticism to accumulation

Pentecostalism, as a religion, has many strands. Some of the factors that differ from one group to the other are organizational structure, doctrines, practices and origin. What unites them most is that members believe they are ‘born-again’ Christians. This is based on the biblical conversion experience of being ‘born-again’ through an individual act of repentance and submission. This implies ‘giving your life to Christ’, which is the doctrinal cornerstone of Christianity (Marshall 1992). Another central tenet shared by Pentecostals, is baptism by the Holy Spirit, the sign of which is speaking in tongues or glossolalia, expressed in the verse from the story of the Pentecost in the Acts of the Apostles: ‘And they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterances’. Being ‘born-again’ is seen as a cornerstone of Christianity, but Pentecostals believe that members of mainline Christian groups are yet to have this conversion experience in their lives because some of the doctrines and practices of these churches are not in compliance with Christianity. For instance, they have often considered the display of the statues of Mary or Jesus in mainline churches as the worship of idols.

A striking difference in doctrine distinguishing one Pentecostal group from another concerns the economic message. Indeed, my research was mainly inspired by my observation that in the area where I live and work, Southwest Cameroon – just as elsewhere in Africa – a striking transition had taken place from what I would like to call ‘early’ or ‘classical’ Pentecostalism to a more ‘modern’ variant. Early Pentecostalism preached an ascetic doctrine, which stressed perfection, strict moral ethics and biblical inerrancy. The ways of the ‘world’ were considered the ways of sin, so believers were exhorted to shun all unnecessary material and carnal pleasures. Modern Pentecostalism, on the other hand has embraced a gospel of accumulation, which sees the ways of the ‘world’ no longer as the ways of sin. It encourages ‘believers’ to accumulate already here on earth. This difference in economic message is the major distinction between classical and modern Pentecostalism. Elsewhere in Africa as well early Pentecostal churches embraced the ascetic doctrine of classical Pentecostalism,

while the new churches are emphasizing a gospel of accumulation. For instance, David Maxwell (1998) discusses a similar transition within the Zimbabwean Assembly of God, Africa (ZAOGA). While a majority of newer Pentecostal groups are preaching a message of accumulation, a few - for instance, Deeper Life Bible Church Nigeria - maintain asceticism. Deeper Life Bible Church goes to the extent of telling its members not to watch television, drink soft drinks, wear jewellery and refuse contact with non-believers (Ojo 1992). A recent development in African Pentecostalism is that some of the earliest groups in the continent, which adopted the ascetic doctrine of the classical Pentecostalism, have shifted to the new message of accumulation.

In Cameroon, the earliest Pentecostal churches - notably the Apostolic one, which was brought in by a Nigerian (I.O. Oyoyo) in 1948 and Full Gospel Mission, introduced by a German (Reverend Werner Knorr) in 1961 - are examples of groups that have made this shift. Central to my research was the intention to investigate and analyse the Full Gospel Mission (at the moment the biggest in Cameroon) as a special case. A rapid overview of my data on this Church can indicate what changes I am referring to. My findings on this church reveal that this change to a more 'modern' outlook started in 1988, after about 27 years of maintaining a position of complete asceticism. In this case it was also a relatively smooth transition. The decision to shift from complete asceticism to accumulation proved to be crucial to the everyday life of the church since it concerned a doctrinal position in matters of faith. For this reason, only the authorities of the church can sanction such a transition. In 2001, I succeeded in having two interviews with the Missionary Founder of the Church, Reverend Werner Knorr, in his Bamenda residence. My aim was especially to learn more about the position of the church on accumulation. In reply he presented me a document that was supposed to summarize the official position of the Church. The document, entitled *Full Gospel Mission: What does the Bible say? Our position on prosperity* was prepared and signed by the Missionary Founder himself. The document highlights biblical passages defending prosperity and it equally encourages members to accumulate. The Reverend told me that it was prepared in 1988 when the church authorities saw the necessity of putting less emphasis on asceticism, leaving room for a gospel that would allow both the church and its members to prosper. As the reverend was the Missionary Founder of the church and the first Mission Superintendent, playing from the beginning a key role in making the church adopt asceticism, it was clear that - since this document came from him - the church authorities sanctioned the shift from asceticism to prosperity. Striking is that Mission business enterprises were created only after this date. Nowadays the Mission runs enterprises in the areas

of health, education and book selling, but before these were all non-existent. A majority of these enterprises were created only after 1990.

One thing that the document makes clear is that the church does not completely turn its back to asceticism. Though a majority of its members seem to celebrate the idea of accumulation, those who do not support it are allowed to practise asceticism; this is affirmed by other quotes from the Bible. For this reason, it is not a surprise to find some Full Gospel Mission members are still clinging to asceticism. However this concerns mainly some elderly members, and it is likely that in the nearest future when most of them must have died, asceticism within this church will become something of the past. But unlike in the case of Full Gospel Mission, the transition within ZAOGA was not so smooth because it faced resistance from some members of the church, particularly the older generation led by the early pastors of the church.

Collecting data on this transition made me realize that accumulation is a new phenomenon among Pentecostals in Cameroon. It developed mainly after the economic crisis in the country had started - that is, after 1987. Since the economic crisis, there has been an explosion of Pentecostalism in Cameroon and virtually all the new groups cherish this message of accumulation while, as noted, the old generation of Pentecostal churches, which before the crisis had all adopted a gospel of asceticism, have also switched to a gospel of accumulation. The economic crisis affecting the country must have definitely influenced the decision of Full Gospel Mission (just as in the case of the Apostolic Church) to embrace accumulation because these churches use it as a strategy to raise money for their activities. All these churches no longer receive much external financial and material support (as some of them did before the crisis). The message to accumulate is passed on to members through sermons in church and over the radio, through literature, but also through the flashy lifestyles of some of the church leaders. In the case of the Full Gospel Mission membership has been increasing since it adopted this position. Yet, the very fact that this switch to a gospel of accumulation coincided with the onset of a crisis, lasting until now and bringing general impoverishment, raises urgent questions: how it is possible to maintain this emphasis on riches already during lifetime in a situation of economic disarray? How do Pentecostal churches deal with their believers' inevitable disappointment since many of them remain poor? And how can believers maintain their faith in spite of such disappointment?

It is clear that this switch in 'modern' Pentecostalism from asceticism to accumulation is a more general phenomenon. It has been acknowledged by many scholars of Pentecostalism in Latin America and Africa (Gifford 1991, 1998; 2001; Marshall 1992, 2001; Maxwell 1998; Meyer 1998). It is attributed largely to the ongoing widespread and intensive dissemination by various Pentecostal

opinion leaders, working on a global scale, of a gospel of prosperity (Gifford 1991, 1998, 2001). According to this gospel, God has mercifully provided all the needs of humanity in the suffering and death of Christ, and every Christian should now share the victory of Christ over sickness and poverty. A believer has a right to the blessing of health and wealth won by Christ, and he or she can obtain these blessings merely by emphatic confession of sin. This theology teaches that the spiritual and material fortunes of a 'believer' are dependent on faith and on how much he gives spiritually and materially to God or his representative in the world. Though this applies not only to material but also to spiritual giving - and similarly not only to material but also to spiritual prosperity in biblical sense - most groups emphasize the importance of financial prosperity and financial giving here and now. The aspect of spiritual giving and prosperity seems to have been pushed aside because Pentecostal leaders use the emphasis on the financial gift as a springboard to raise money for the church and also for themselves. As Fomum (1988: 42) puts in reference to the gospel, 'you prosper by planting a financial seed in faith, the return on which will meet all your financial needs.' What interests me in this study is not the doctrine and the way it is deduced from biblical meanings, but rather how Pentecostal groups use this meaning in everyday practice. The leaders rely on heavily selected biblical texts emphasizing the importance of tithing (which goes to the pastor and local church). There is a promise that giving in this way will lead to magical prosperity, which is clearly attractive in societies where poverty is rife and there seem to be few ways of escaping it. Sometimes, the tithes of the poor support a pastor in maintaining a highflying lifestyle. This was true of the late archbishop Benson Idahosa in Benin, Nigeria. Gifford (2004) reveals that in some of the new Pentecostal churches in Ghana, members are sometimes urged to borrow money, if necessary, in order to give to the church; they are told that they thus qualify for supernatural monetary blessing.

The prosperity gospel is undoubtedly an American creation. Its historical development is traceable through well-known evangelists like E.W Kenyon, A.A Allen, Oral Roberts, T.L Osborn, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, and others. Its rapid rise and diffusion in the 1970s proved to be conducive to the establishing of true 'empires' of these 'media evangelists.' In the USA during the 1960s and early 1970s when the economy was booming and there were many job opportunities, Pentecostal leaders propagated the gospel as a means for gaining funds for evangelization and to build media empires and Churches in support of their leaders. This proved to be very successful: enormous resources were made available to meet the above objectives (Gifford 1998: 39). Marshall (1992) in her study of the Pentecostals of Nigeria reveals that in Africa, the rise of these movements was deeply influenced by the outreach of American evangelism.



Many Pentecostal pastors in Africa received their training from the Bible Colleges run by the prosperity preachers in America, either studying there full-time or through correspondence. For instance, Benson Idahosa was trained in the Rhema Bible College of Kenneth Hagin in Oklahoma. When he returned to Nigeria, he founded his own Bible school in Benin City; Africans who could not go to the US for training went there. The prosperity gospel thus became widespread in Africa and Latin America. Indeed, even some mainline Churches - for instance, the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon -, have started to follow a similar approach in order to raise money as well, particularly during harvest thanks-giving period.

My choice for a focus on this switch to a prosperity gospel does certainly not imply that I see economic factors as determinant in the recent, rapid spread of Pentecostalism on the African continent. On the contrary, much recent work on African developments (see Meyer 1995 and van Dijk 2000 and 2002) have convincingly shown the limitations of the economic determinism which seemed implied in some earlier studies on Latin America (see, for instance, Cleary and Steward-Gambino 1992 or Brain 1998) and which is hovering also in Gifford's earlier work (for instance in Gifford 1991). Indeed, one of the interesting aspects of my secondary topic of the recent tendency towards 'Pentecostalization' in mainline churches in Southwest Cameroon (already referred to above), is that it highlights precisely how important more spiritual and ritual aspects are- the great enthusiasm that talking in tongues and other ecstatic aspects of Pentecostal services evoke- to understand the popularity of Pentecostalism. Therefore, the switch to a prosperity gospel, and the more involved stance this implied of many Pentecostal churches on economic concerns, can only be seen as one factor behind the continuing proliferation of Pentecostalism in Cameroon. However, it is clear that it is an aspect that attracts great attention among potential converts. Moreover, this quite dramatic switch from asceticism to accumulation seems to mark developments elsewhere as well. In general, Pentecostalism has been studied already in many African countries. However, as yet, there is still little research that explicitly focuses on this switch from asceticism to accumulation, and its specific trajectories and effects in different countries. This study hopes to fill this gap for Cameroon. From the beginning of my field-work my main intention was, therefore, to study how Pentecostals applied this new message of prosperity in the Cameroon context marked by severe economic malaise.

The central questions for my field-work were:

- What accounts for the proliferation of Pentecostalism in Cameroon in the last decade?
- What answers does Pentecostalism (in general and for the different strands in particular) provide to the predicaments of Cameroonians, which the mainline churches have failed to do? In this context I paid attention to both spiritual and material aspects.

Within this broader context, I concentrated upon my specific question:

- How do Pentecostal leaders keep up their economic salvation message in the face of inevitable disappointment? They promise people riches through the gospel of prosperity; however, only very few people get rich through this method, yet the movement still remains attractive to many Cameroonians. How is this possible?

## Related topics: Pentecostalization of mainline churches and involvement in politics

During my research two related themes emerged that were closely connected to these central questions. Firstly I soon discovered that members of mainline Christian churches were increasingly influenced by Pentecostal doctrines and practices; in practice this meant that these churches were being ‘pentecostalized.’ This made me develop an interest to know why and how this pentecostalization process of mainline churches was taking place. Another related topic concerned the political context. My study was done at a time Cameroon was undergoing difficult democratic and economic transitions; it still is, up to the present day. Citizens are struggling for genuine democratic reforms as a step to achieve a stable economic situation, but many feel that the government is not willing to promote this. I discovered too that the mainline churches, as part of the civil society, are increasingly putting pressure to bear on the government for realizing genuine democratic reforms. Their members have been affected by the crisis, which invariably implied that the churches too are affected. I therefore developed an interest to know which churches are involved in this struggle and also whether the Pentecostals churches were also among the churches and if not, why not?

Regarding the first related topic, the ‘pentecostalization’ of the mainline churches, it is clear that this development is the outcome of the rise of Pentecostalism over the last decades. Pentecostalism is flourishing because members of the mainline churches keep defecting to these new religious groups for reasons such as the spiritual healing that Pentecostalism claims to provide -, employment opportunities, lively worship services and the aggressive evangelization strategies adopted by Pentecostals in the form of ‘crusades,’ campaign rallies and free distribution of literature and stickers. This development is certainly not unique to Cameroon.

As elsewhere in Africa, some mainline churches have become aware of the influence of Pentecostal churches on their members and are beginning to take precautions by cautiously accommodating some of the practices that have made Pentecostalism attractive. For instance, Gerry ter Haar (1994) shows that the Methodist and Roman Catholic Churches in Ghana are doing this. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church in Ghana, she notes that revival practices were first

introduced in 1971 when a Holy Spirit Sister started a prayer group in Koforidua after returning from the USA. Another group was established in Accra in the same year, and a year later two medical Missionary Sisters, also from the USA, began the movement in Kumasi, which became something of a centre for charismatic renewal. Today many parishes of the Catholic Church in Ghana have prayer groups in which healing is an important element, as indeed it is in many other churches in Ghana. In another study conducted in Ghana, Opoky Onyinah (undated) maintains that African people in general strongly believe in witchcraft, demons, ancestral curses or diseases. Thus, when feeling threatened by any of these, they will look for spiritual healing. He argues that every church finds it worthwhile to include spiritual healing in its program since failure to do so amounts to losing members to churches that include such activities. This again contributes to the continuous pentecostalization of Christianity in Africa.

While such developments are allowed within some mainline churches, others do not tolerate the changes within their own framework. Within these churches whenever a member or priest tries to introduce Pentecostal practices, he will run into problems with the authorities of the church. For instance, in the Buea Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, one of its priests started a revival movement in his parish, which attracted many followers. When the bishop realised that the movement, inspired by the expansion of Pentecostalism in the region, had adopted several Pentecostal practices, he banned it. This resulted in serious tensions between the group and the bishop – all the more so since it seemed to be linked to the opposition between ‘autochthons’ and ‘strangers’, in this area a particularly virulent tension. Local South-westerners felt that the bishop (of Northwest Province origin and thus considered to be a ‘stranger’) had reacted that way because the founder of the group was an ‘autochthon’ of the Southwest (Konings 2003). This case offers a telling example of how church authorities may successfully suppress a move to pentecostalize a church. In some cases such tensions end up either in some members defecting to Pentecostal groups where they believe they could have this spiritual fulfilment or in the founding of a new Pentecostal church, where they can continue their activities. For instance, Meyer (1995) notes that the Lord’s Pentecostal Church of Ghana seceded from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) when one of the leaders, Samuel Yao Amedzro, started a prayer group, which adopted Pentecostal elements within the EPC against the wish of the church authorities. He and other leaders were excommunicated because they resisted. Thereupon they reacted by founding the Lord’s Pentecost church (Meyer 1995).

In Cameroon, there is a gradual process of pentecostalization, which is taking place in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC). The PCC case, discussed in chapter five below is of particular interest because here changes seem to come

from below. The consequence is that the authorities of the church, who initially resisted were forced to gradually give in to the wish of the ordinary members. Two earlier attempts were made by leading figures of the church to introduce Pentecostal practices, but each met with strong resistance from the church authorities. The first case started in the late 1970s and the second in the early 1990s. Each case ended up in the formation of a new Pentecostal church, with a bulk of adherents being converts from the PCC. The questions this study attempted to answer were why members of the PCC wanted to imitate Pentecostalism and why the authorities, which had resisted earlier attempts did open up to Pentecostal practices more recently. Two factors seem to be of central importance to explain varying degrees and varying pathways of this process of pentecostalization of mainline churches in Southwest Cameroon. The first is the influence of Nigerian Pentecostalism. Most of the Pentecostal groups in Cameroon and Molyko in particular, have their origin from Nigeria. This makes the Pentecostal scene in this part of Cameroon, almost a replica of what happens in Nigeria. Nigerian Pentecostal music is played everywhere in Cameroon; over the radio, in homes, bars, restaurants, markets discotheques and even nightclubs. Cameroonians enjoy it as they sing and dance to its rhythm at funerals, in churches, and at weddings. In Molyko, there is the Revival Gospel Radio Station (an FM radio station run by a pastor of Full Gospel Mission), which specialises in preaching the word of God and playing gospel music, most of these from Nigeria. This station is highly listened to in Buea and its environs because of its moving sermons and Nigerian Pentecostal songs. The station has had an influence on the ongoing singing and dancing of Pentecostal music in, for instance, the Molyko Presbyterian congregation because moving songs in the church are usually first heard played several times for the entertainment of the public over this station.

A second factor is that the economic crisis has made medical healthcare very expensive for the great majority of Cameroonians; this pushes some of them to turn to spiritual healing. Rather than going to Pentecostal groups for this, members of the congregation believe it is better for them to adopt the method in their own congregation. My main conclusion in chapter five is that, learning a lesson from the past, the authorities of the church tolerate a certain pentecostalization from below because they want to avoid further defection to Pentecostal groups.

Regarding the political role of the churches, there is an extensive literature on the involvement of Christian groupings in the struggle over democratization in various countries in Africa (Gifford, ed. 1995) and in Latin America (Cleary and Steward-Gambino, eds. 1992; Stoll, 1990; Chesnut, 1997). The general fight for democratic reforms all over the continent and elsewhere in the Southern

hemisphere is clearly linked to the end of the cold war. In the late 1980's Africans increasingly expressed the feeling that they had been ruled for many years by dictators and that it was time to fight for democratic reforms which would put an end to this. Churches in many African countries are known to have played a significant role in this context. A comparison of such developments in various countries shows striking differences: in most countries, some churches joined forces in fighting for democratic reforms while others aligned with the government to stifle the process. Gifford (1995) reveals that in many Francophone African countries, churches joined other forces in calling for a national conference to address issues affecting the nation. In those countries where dictators gave in, the church played a key role because most of those appointed to chair the conferences were religious leader. For instance, in Benin this role was played by Mgr Isidore de Sousa (archbishop of Cotonou); in Gabon by Mgr Basil Mve Engone (bishop of Oyem); in Togo by Mgr Sanouko Kpodzro (bishop of Atakpame); and in Congo by Mgr Ernest Kombo (bishop of Owando). In some countries, church leaders have exerted considerable influence by issuing pastoral letters, expressing the position of the church on political issues affecting the country. In other countries, some churches were fighting for democratic reforms, while others aligned with the government. For instance, while the mainline churches in Kenya were opposed to the President Moi's regime in the late 1980s and onward, the Redeemed Gospel Church (a Pentecostal church) supported him. This role played by the churches has always brought conflicts between the government and the churches or the outspoken clergies.

In Latin America, where this struggle of churches for democratic reforms started earlier, the Roman Catholic clergies spearheaded it. In those countries priests were interested in ever-increasing proportion in participating in the pastoral decisions of the church, but above all, they wanted the church to break its ties with an unjust order and to fight for the masses, which, in their view, suffered from misery and deprivation. Some priests participated in politics, often in alignment with revolutionary groups. Consequently, some of them were murdered or deported, Christians persecuted, the Roman Catholic press attacked, and ecclesiastical premises searched by the political authorities (Gutierrez, 1977). The Vatican did not always support the priests, and its lack of support at times led to friction between Bishops and representatives of the pope.

In the Cameroonian context, mainline churches such as the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) - and particularly its Anglophone clergies -, and the PCC, which focuses almost exclusively on issues affecting the Anglophones, have been at the forefront of efforts to see a truly democratic society take root in Cameroon. Striking is, however that Pentecostal churches seem to maintain a peripheral position. Chapter six has addressed a few reasons than can explain this contrast.

In Cameroon, unlike elsewhere in Africa - for instance, in Nigeria where most of these churches have their origin - the Pentecostal churches have maintained a peripheral political and social stance. Unlike the mainline churches, they have had only peripheral influence in politics. This is because their leaders tell their followers that churches should primarily be preoccupied with a spiritual agenda, such as prayer, Bible study, preparation for the sacrament, evangelization and individual pastoral counselling. Each group, as a body, involves itself in politics only in defence of its official teaching and interest. However, individual members are not barred from political issues, but they do not involve themselves actively – at least not to the same degree as members of mainline Christian churches. Pentecostals in Cameroon emphasize that they may not belong to or campaign for political parties, and may not form political parties or take part in political demonstrations; they may, however register and vote.

Of course, this apparent difference in political involvement between some mainline churches and most Pentecostalist ones has to be seen in a broader context. Already in her 1985 study of an 'independent church in South Africa did Jean Comaroff warn that a notion like 'resistance' has to have a broad interpretation in this context and that it should not be limited to the formal political arena's only. It is certainly true for Pentecostalism in Cameroon as well, that many of its aspects - its hyperactive services, the autonomous behaviour of many of the leaders and followers, taking constantly new initiatives- sit uneasily with the established norms of the period of forceful nation-building and one-partyism from the first decade after independence. Indeed, Pentecostalism only started to flower when this highly controlled order was gradually relaxed during the 1980s. In such a perspective, if one takes a broader vision of what constitutes 'politics', focussing only on the apparent support of Pentecostalism could be misleading. In other aspects it has implications that are certainly affecting the status quo.

However, in a highly conflictuous political situation, as in Cameroon in the 1990s, the question as to why certain religious leaders did raise their voice within the formal political arena's, while others refrained from doing so, is certainly an important one. As said, the onset of democratization in the country since 1990 brought great popular unrest. For a time, it seemed that the Biya regime would be toppled by determined opposition, especially from the Anglophone parts of the country (where Pentecostalism was especially spreading). There was also great popular indignation about the way in which the regime succeeded in rigging successive elections and thus holding on to power. The hardships of the continuing economic crisis added to this indignation. In this context, it is striking that it were especially representatives of mainline churches- and notably of the Roman Catholic Church- who openly protested against the regime's policies.

Below (notably in chapter six) I will further analyse factors that can explain the difference in this aspects with Pentecostalist churches, both leaders and followers.

## Context of crisis and central questions

Since the mid-eighties, Cameroon has been going through a serious economic crisis that has left few untouched and retarded progress significantly. Although predictable and indeed foreseen (see Jua, 1991), the crisis seems to have taken government by surprise as very little was done to avert or to prepare for it. The crisis has given rise to compounding poverty, misery and unemployment and ferments fear, doubt, and uncertainty right down to increase in social insecurity. Armed banditry is now commonplace, with bandits operating in broad daylight and often with impunity. More and more young people and whole families even (cf. American lottery organized yearly by the American government for other nationals wishing to migrate to the US) are either dreaming of or migrating to the West to seek greener pastures. With the added advantages of the Internet and cellular phones, Cameroonians in the diaspora daily liaise with relatives and friends at home, coaching them how to avoid the ever-sophisticated immigration hurdles mounted by Western governments.

Causes of the crisis are many, complex and very difficult to define for the ordinary man, or even for academics and other experts (see Tedga, 1990; Jua, 1991; van de Walle, 1993; Konings, 1995, 1996a and b, 1998; Nyamnjoh, 1999). Yet government efforts to control it have for over twenty years yielded little dividend in concrete terms though there is much official rhetoric and contradictory claims of recovery in progress. The 1998 and 1999 classification of Cameroon as the most corrupt country in the world, according to criteria elaborated by Transparency International and the country's application to the Paris Club to be considered a highly indebted poor country in 2000, which eventual led to its admission into the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative in 2006, speak as much for government's failure to redress the economy.

The churches have been worried about the crisis as well. The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) and the Roman Catholic Church, in particular, have been making their own spiritual contribution to the fight against it. They have often expressed this during sermons in churches and through pastoral letters. But they have neither succeeded in extracting the concessions they want from government, nor in convincing their members on the practical relevance of their options and strategies (Titi Nwel, 1995; Médard, 1997).

In the same years when the economic crisis took shape, Cameroon has witnessed the proliferation and flourishing of Pentecostal groups, particularly in

the English-speaking provinces. Some of these groups are: The Apostolic Church, Full Gospel Mission, Church of Christ, The Church of God, The True Church of Christ, Assemblies of God, Africa Bible Church, Christian Missionary Fellowship International, Winners' Chapel, The Deeper Life Bible Church, Arm of God Church, New Generation Church, The Celestial Frontiers Millennial Church, United Pentecostal Church, Bethel World Outreach Ministry, Living World Church, Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, Living Faith Worldwide Church and the Cameroon Church of Christ.

The rise and spread of Pentecostalism during this period of the crisis – as in many other parts of Africa coupled with mass defections from the established churches to the new churches – could be interpreted as a public sign of dissatisfaction by Christians with the way the established churches have gone about addressing the spiritual and material needs of their followers. Such increasing disillusionment shows that a surging number of Christians do not consider it enough for the mainline churches simply to make critical statements about the worsening economic situation or condemning the few who live in obscene opulence while the majority wallow in misery and poverty. Thus in the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, faced with this ineptitude on the part of the mainline churches and the state, healing charismatic churches have mushroomed in Kinshasa and other urban centres (tragic spaces in which one is constantly confronted by misery and hardship) seeking empowerment for their communities through all sorts of innovative ways (Devisch, 1996).

A cursory survey of this situation in Cameroon indicates that most of these Pentecostal churches are brought in from Nigeria through the Anglophone part of the country where they were first established before moving to other parts of the country. For instance, the early Pentecostal churches (notably The Apostolic Church and Full Gospel Mission, to whom I sometimes refer in this book as mainline Pentecostal churches in Cameroon) were brought in from Nigeria in 1948 and 1961 respectively. This Nigerian root has made Pentecostalism in Cameroon to have lots of Nigerian Pentecostalism characteristics. Also almost all the local pioneers or co-pioneers of Pentecostal churches were originally ministers or elders in an established church who were disgruntled with a particular aspect in either the worship or the doctrine of the church to which they belonged before the split. For instance, the Christian Missionary Fellowship International was founded by Zacharias Fomum, a University Don, who was once an elder in one of the mainline churches (the Presbyterian Church) in Yaoundé and incidentally the son of a retired pastor of the church.

Against this background of a flourishing of Pentecostal groupings in a context of ongoing economic crisis this book attempts to provide answers to the following questions:



- 1) What answer has Pentecostalism provided to the material predicaments of Cameroonians? More in particular: how does the new gospel of accumulation and prosperity relate to these everyday predicaments?
- 2) What accounts for the proliferation of Pentecostal groupings and why is there continuous defection of members of the mainline churches to such Pentecostal groups in the country?
- 3) What factor(s) can account for the increasing pentecostalization of the mainline Churches?
- 4) How do the Pentecostal churches relate to the democratization impasse in Cameroon?

## Relevance of general debates on Pentecostalism and religious change for this study

The remarkable transformation of global Pentecostalism in the last decades has attracted the attention of many academics. Most scholars seem to argue that this phenomenon should be understood as an aspect of globalization, and of an American dominance, which is cultural as well as economic and political. This section of the Introduction offers an overview of the work of five scholars on Pentecostalism in Africa and the main points they raise. The aim is to highlight their relevance for my study of the changing position of Pentecostalism in Cameroon. These five scholars have been chosen first of all because they are among the leading scholars on Pentecostal studies in Africa. They have carried out studies on different aspects of Pentecostalism in various countries, making it possible for me to compare various aspects of this religious stream to my studies in Cameroon. Focusing on one issue or on one country might make it impossible to outline general aspects and the differences within Pentecostalism. The scholars whose work I chose to discuss are Ruth Marshall-Fratani, Paul Gifford, David Maxwell, Birgit Meyer and Rijk van Dijk.

### *Ruth Marshall-Fratani*

Ruth Marshall-Fratani is an associate scholar at CEMAF, University of Paris 1. She is a political scientist, who has developed an interest in the study of Pentecostalism. She has done extensive research on politics in Ivory Coast and acted as a consultant on violence and conflict in this country and in West Africa in general for the NGO International Crisis Group and the United Nations Organization. In her earlier study of Pentecostalism, her area of focus was Nigeria. Some of her publications on Pentecostalism are “*God is not a democrat*”: *Pentecostalism and democratization in Nigeria* (1995) and *Mediating the global and local in Nigerian Pentecostalism* (1998). Like my work on Cameroon, her work focussed on how Nigerian Pentecostals relate to politics and also how, with the gospel of prosperity, they have embraced the global economy. She writes less on another topic in my work, the influence Pentecostalism is exerting on mainline Christianity in Cameroon.

One of her publications, which I will discuss here in more detail is her chapter on 'Pentecostalism in Southern Nigeria: An overview', in Gifford, ed., *New Dimensions in African Christianity*, 1992. Her main aim in this chapter is to offer an overview of the proliferation of new Christian groups in the Nigerian city of Lagos (one of the cities where proliferation is most obvious because it is the economic capital and largest city in this country). She examines three issues in this work: the differences between the various groups, their common traits and their political involvement.

*a) Distinguishing the groups*

Marshall's work emphatically raises the same issue that is central to my study: the recent transition within this movement from an ascetic doctrine to a prosperity gospel. However, she formulates this somewhat differently. She distinguishes two groups: the Holiness Movement and the Pentecostals. Her argument for making this distinction is that Pentecostalism is a heterogeneous movement with marked internal differences in doctrines, practices, the social bases of the various groups and para-group organizations, the varying degrees of denominational affiliation and the way in which Pentecostals relate to the socio-political context of their society. Because of this, she believes it would be wrong to assume that the whole movement forms a homogenous whole. She prefers to use the word 'born-again', as used in the Nigeria context, to refer to this movement, which scholars generally call Pentecostalism. Nigerians call them 'Born-again' because members emphatically refer to themselves as 'born-again' Christians. Biblically, this expression refers to the conversion experience of being 'born again' through an individual act of repentance and submission. That is, 'giving your life to Christ', which is expected of every Christian. Members of these groups claim to have fulfilled this biblical requirement and they continuously accuse outsiders of not being 'born-again.'

The Holiness movement consists in Marshall's view of the early 'born-again' groups, which emphasized asceticism as an economic message. As churches that belong to this group she mentions Faith Tabernacle, the Apostolic Church, Apostolic Faith, the Assemblies of God and the Deeper Life Bible Church. Most of these churches were established as mission churches from the United States of America and Britain from the 1930s to the 1950s. Only the Deeper Life Bible Church was founded by a Nigerian. All these churches embrace a 'holiness' or 'righteousness' theology, which stresses perfection, strict personal ethics and biblical inerrancy. Materialism and carnal pleasures are sin, so 'believers' are expected to shun them. They stress repentance and restitution for past wrong. Believers are not expected to lie, cheat, steal, quarrel, gossip, give or take bribes, smoke, fornicate, beat their spouses, lose their tempers, or deny assistance to

other members in need. Only limited contact is allowed between members of the opposite sex and a strict dressing code for all sexes is enforced. Marital infidelity or divorce is not permitted. Faith healing and miracles are central to the churches that belong to this group to the extent that some even refuse medical treatment. The Deeper Life Bible Church goes to the extent of telling its members to abstain from watching the television, drinking even soft drinks, wearing jewellery and having contact with unbelievers.

The 'Pentecostal' group is made up of the younger 'born-again' churches, which came into being from the 1970s to the 1980s. This group embraces the doctrine of prosperity, which allows its members to accumulate. The doctrines of this group were influenced by literature on prosperity by preachers from the United States of America. Moreover, some of the Nigerian pastors of this group, for instance Benson Idahosa, were trained in the United States of America in Bible schools run by the pioneer prosperity pastors of the country – such as the Rhema Bible College run by Kenneth Hagin in Oklahoma. Some 'Pentecostals' had been members of the Holiness movement before the coming in of 'Pentecostal' doctrines. Christ Chapel, founded by a Nigerian, Pastor Tunde Joda, is among the first churches of the Pentecostal group in Lagos and it is the most popular. Membership is drawn from among prominent business people, university students and lecturers and even pops stars. Members have the tendency to wear Western dresses, listen to Western style gospel music and consume Western religious literature. This, Marshall argues, highlights how deeply notions of 'modernity' have been 'internalized' by this group. The church leaders strive to create international connections that will enable them accumulate. The more they travel and acquire luxury items, the more members see this as a sign of goodness of God to his faithful followers. Members tend to give much money to the church with the hope of receiving more in return.

*b) Common traits among all the groups*

Marshall emphasizes also that although there are these differences, the 'born-again' see themselves as a special and sacred community whose identity and unity should be aggressively promoted to those who are outside. They have been fostering this identity, working in unison. She examines the factors, which made members believe that they should be united. She argues that the constant economic and political pressure brought to bear on the urban dwellers in Nigeria has necessitated the need for unity. The pressure made members believe that by working together they can evolve strategies be they doctrinal, economic or social that can enable them to overcome economic hardship and poverty. For instance, on the doctrinal front, both asceticism and prosperity doctrines are meant to provide a solution for economic difficulties; in the everyday social context.

Being a needy member of such a group guarantees that one will always be assisted by other members or the church. Churches provide institutional support, both formally and informally, in areas such as healthcare, education and family life to their members. To consolidate this unity, the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) was formed in the late 1980s. PFN is the national umbrella association that brings together all 'born-again' groups in Nigeria. It speaks on behalf of all the groups and it defends their interest when the need arises. It lays strong emphasis on unity among members. Since its foundation, it has resolved a number of differences within the community.

*c) Political involvement*

Marshall shows that the 'born-again' in Nigeria, are outspoken on political issues. They believe that by taking part in politics, they are able to eliminate, through an election, the 'enemy' who rules the country. The enemy here most often refers to non-Christians. Apart from being active during elections, they have protested political decisions that do not favour them. For instance, during the period of military rule, and the admission of Nigeria into the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1985, they joined other Christian groups in fighting against what they called the 'Islamization of the country.' They have always been outspoken on the religious crisis pitting the Christians against the Moslems in North Nigeria. Marshall gives a detailed analysis of this relationship between Nigerian Pentecostalism and Politics in her article, "'God is not a Democrat" Pentecostalism and Democratization in Nigeria', in Gifford, ed., *The Christian Churches and the Democratization of Africa*, 1998.

What is the relevance of these insights to my study of developments in Cameroon? Certain issues raised by Marshall about Nigerian Pentecostalism hardly correspond to my own work - even though most Pentecostal groups in Cameroon have their origin from Nigeria. The first issue is her distinction between 'Holiness' groups and 'Pentecostals'. The difference she gives lies in the economic messages of the groups: while the former is ascetic, the later is accumulative. In Cameroon, there is no exclusively 'ascetic' group left and the general name for all these believers is 'born-again' as it is the case in Nigeria. While the new groups came in already with an accumulative message, the older ascetic churches as well have gradually switched to accumulation. Marshall mentions the Deeper Life Bible Church as one of the 'holiness' groups but in Cameroon this church, which was founded by a Nigerian and is still managed from its international headquarters in Lagos, is not ascetic. It has its own business enterprises in the form of schools in Cameroon, just like other churches. I have elaborated on how schools, as well as other institutions run by churches in Cameroon have to be seen as business enterprises, for instance because of the

high fees paid (see chapter four). Moreover members of the Deeper Life Bible Church do watch TV, dress like other Pentecostals and equally engage in business ventures in a bid to accumulate. In view of all this it is very likely that in Nigeria as well this church might no longer be ascetic. Marshall did her studies more than fourteen years ago and it is possible that the church subsequently switched to accumulation. The accumulative practices, which she attributes to the Pentecostals in Nigeria, are very similar to those in Cameroon - for instance, dressing gorgeously and owning expensive cars, travelling out in a bid to accumulate and involvement in businesses.

The second issue concerns the unity among Pentecostals in Nigeria, especially in their involvement in politics. Here again there are striking differences with the situation in Cameroon. Pentecostals in Cameroon do not have the kind of unity, which exists among those of Nigeria. They have no umbrella association like the PFN. Each church does its own things, independent of the others. But they have all in common that they do not involve themselves in politics and have never done so, unlike the mainline churches that have consistently been outspoken on issues of politics in sermons, pastoral letters and also took part in talks aimed at resolving a political impasse.

#### *Paul Gifford*

Paul Gifford teaches in the Department for the Study of Religions at the Centre of African Studies in the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. A professor in African Christianity, his research interest is in recent developments in African Christianity and the socio-political role of religion in Africa. He has done extensive research on these topics with particular focus on countries such as Liberia, Ghana, Cameroon, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. He was the first academic to realize the influence of the 'Born-again' movement in Africa. He has written an impressive series of books and articles on the subject, among which are *Religious Rights in Southern Africa* (1988), *Christianity and Politics in Doe's Liberia* (1993), *Ghana's charismatic churches* (1994), *The complex provenance of some elements of African Pentecostal theology* (2001) and *Ghana's new Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy* (2004b). In the above works, Gifford looked at two broad issues which recur also in my work. The first is the involvement of these churches in politics. Unlike Marshall, who mainly concentrated on the political role of Pentecostal churches, Gifford (like myself) looked at both mainline churches and Pentecostalism in their role in politics. Another issue that is central in Gifford's work and my own is the switch to a prosperity gospel. In his 2001 publication, Gifford uses Crowder's work among the Yoruba of Nigeria to argue that though this prosperity doctrine may be an American creation, it is not

something really new to Africans since in African traditional religion the members' prosperity is central as well. This implies that it had been part of African culture, which on this point converged with the Christian doctrine on prosperity. However, just like Marshall, Gifford did not touch the third topic of my work, the 'pentecostalization' of mainline Christian churches. .

Gifford's pioneering role, and the sheer volume of his publications, meant that academics on new Christian movements in Africa have tended to see these through his eyes. Because of his mastery of the topic and the extensive research he had already conducted on the theme, the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) - a body consisting of most mainline Christian churches in Africa, but not the Roman Catholic Church – asked him in 1990 to coordinate a project to study these new churches. In the context of this project Gifford undertook various activities. First it involved extensive travel on the part of the coordinator, in an effort to build up a general picture of the phenomenon. He presented this general picture during an AACC symposium on the theme 'Africa beyond 2000: Problems and Promises for Missions' held in Mombassa Kenya, in November 1991. The second element was to discuss with church leaders across the continent, in an effort to raise awareness of the issues involved. The third element was to talk to scholars in seminaries and religious studies departments of universities, in an attempt to interest them in doing more detailed studies of the phenomenon and even to encourage students to write research papers on new movements in their own region. The AACC project ended in 1992 and various studies carried out by academics under the sponsorship of the project, were edited and put together by Gifford in a volume entitled 'New Dimensions in African Christianity'. This volume discusses the phenomenon in Nigeria, Liberia, Malawi, Kinshasa and Mozambique.

I already pointed out that Gifford had a special interest in the public face of African Christianity in its interface with socio-political issues. . Apart from his works cited above on Churches and politics, there are others: for instance, he edited *Christian Churches and the Democratization of Africa*, 1995, in which he made a contribution on Liberia entitled "'Directed by the hands of God'": The role of Liberian Christianity during the civil war', in 1998, he published *African Christianity: Its Public Role* in which he analysed the political role churches have been playing in Ghana, Cameroon, Zambia and Uganda. I will focus on one of his works on churches and politics: his 1995 work on Christianity in Liberia during the civil war. In this work, Gifford aimed at analysing the efforts by the various churches in the country to bring peace during the civil war. He first gives a historical presentation of the role churches or church leaders played during the Liberian civil war. He shows that though churches were interested in reaching peace and despite all sorts of activities - involvement in peace talks, issuing

pastoral letters, interviews and sermons - they never made any positive contribution in this direction. They rather relied on the faith gospel stressing that Liberia was a Christian country, which, like Israel of old, was being punished by God for failing to live up to its calling. That is, they believed God was behind everything that was happening in the country. In this emphatically biblical view, God has his own time and his own reasons for doing what he does and it is him who decrees any suffering there is on this earth. Gifford concludes that this position made the various churches a constituent part of the structures of oppression, corruption and mismanagement that characterised the Doe's administration. He argues that churches did not want to be viewed as being against the state; neither could they be pictured as parallel to the state; rather they must be seen as part and parcel of the state apparatus. Ideologically Christianity was used to sanction or explain all kinds of dubious realities, and it supplied the categories and rhetoric to justify various events and structures.

Three years after the publication of this work, Gifford released another book on churches and politics entitled *African Christianity: Its public role*. In this book he made a comparative analysis of the role of Christianity on political issues in Cameroon, Zambia, Ghana and Uganda. For some of the countries he stressed the support given to the government by Christian bodies: for instance, in the case of Pentecostal support to the Chiluba administration in Zambia. For others, however, he stresses Church opposition to the state - - for instance, by referring to the Roman Catholic Church's opposition to the government in Cameroon.

Gifford's work on churches and politics has a direct relationship with my study since one of my central objectives was also to see how Christian Churches relate to politics in Cameroon. My study suggests that the mainline churches in Cameroon are more confrontational with the state than those in Liberia –at least if one accepts Gifford's accusation that the latter were a constituent part of the structures of oppression, corruption and mismanagement that characterised the Doe's administration. However, as said, Gifford acknowledged that this was less the case elsewhere. In the other countries he studied mainline churches did get involved in political debates, criticise government action that might not be good for the citizens and issue pastoral letters, which often brought conflicts between them and the state. As opposed to the Churches in Liberia, which were interested in reaching peace during the war asking for this in sermons and in issuing pastoral letters, but paradoxically believed in a supernatural solution to the problem, the mainline churches in Cameroon believe that bad government policies are often at the centre of socio-political problems; indeed, they emphasize most powerfully that as such, only the state, through good policies, can solve the problems. This is why they keep on confronting the state on socio-political issues. However, Pentecostal churches in Cameroon could be likened to

the mainline Churches in Liberia in that they do not confront the state on socio-political problems. However they differ again from the churches in Liberia in the sense that they completely abstain from any involvement in political debates or activities.

*David Maxwell*

David Maxwell is a Senior Lecturer in History at Keele University, England. His research focus is on the history of African Christianity. Most of his writings are based on Southern Africa, where he spent almost five years, living and working in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique. He has written monographs on missionary encounters in Zimbabwe and the emergence of more autonomous trans-national African Christian movements within Southern Africa. His approach is one of a social historian interested in the complex relations between African traditional religion and Christianity seen in a broader social context. Dominant themes in his works are the relation of Christianity to economic and political change, and its role in the creation of identities of class, gender, generation and ethnicity. Some of his works are *Christians and Chiefs in Zimbabwe: A social history of the Hwesa people 1870-1990* (1999); *African gifts of the spirit: Fundamentalism and the rise of the born-again movement in Africa* (2002); and *'Survival, Revival and Resistance': Continuity and change in Zimbabwe's post-war religion and politics* (2005). One of his works, which I will discuss here in more detail, is "‘Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?’ Pentecostalism, Prosperity and Modernity in Zimbabwe”, in *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28, 3. 1998. In this article, Maxwell presents a particular version of the gospel of prosperity propounded by the Zimbabwe Assembly of God, Africa (ZAOGA), an indigenous Zimbabwean Pentecostal church, which claims to be the largest church in the country. He shows that, while the church's leadership draws inspiration from various American versions of the gospel of prosperity to legitimize accumulation, they have exploited predominantly Zimbabwean concerns to shape their own particular version of the gospel. He explains the prevalence of the doctrine not in terms of whether it is wrong or right, but as a means of enabling Pentecostals to make the best of rapid social change. He argues that for some members of the church, it has engendered social mobility. For others, it has provided a code of conduct, which guards them from falling into poverty and destitution. For all it has provided a pattern for coming to terms with, and benefiting from dominant modern values and institutions.

Maxwell notes that ZAOGA was founded in 1967 by some Zimbabwean Pentecostals led by Ezekiel Guti (archbishop of the church), who in 1967 were expelled from the Pentecostal Assemblies (introduced in Zimbabwe by Canadians) following a struggle with these missionaries. Initially ZOAGA



continued to implement the ascetic doctrine of the older Pentecostal churches but in the 1990s it shifted to the prosperity gospel. The church leaders took this decision when they realized that thus membership would increase and there was the need to explore ways of making political capital out of this.

ZOAGA refined its new gospel of prosperity through two interrelated teachings, which became central to the church's identity. These concern the issues of 'talent' and the 'spirit of poverty.' On the talent issue, each three years every talent worker (business person) has to pledge how much (s)he will earn over the coming six months and what percentage of this will be given to the church.. This gospel was being introduced at a time the cost of living was rising in Zimbabwe due to a Structural Adjustment Programme that was imposed on the country by the World Bank. Maxwell reveals that Zimbabweans, particularly women, responded to the economic difficulties by developing various means of self-reliance, which greatly improved their economic lives. The church leaders then exploited this financial success of its members through instituting this doctrine.

Every time this is about to take place, Guti will decree which new project the church has to undertake so that people should raise much money for it through talents. When the pledges are made, special church services of encouragement are organised and most people willingly work for this. At the end of the 'talent'-period, the money is collected with much celebration. By announcing ostentatiously how much every person has earned within this period and the amount paid to the church, others are encouraged to give more.

Maxwell argues that people willingly work for it not just because they expect much in return, but also because they believe that the money will be cleansed no matter by what means it has been earned. Money is given sacred blessing and rather than looking at it as a 'dark satanic force' - as the older Pentecostal groups did - ZOAGA members seek to transform it for the sake of the kingdom of God. Moreover, the doctrine has instilled hard work into the members' habits, as each will work hard to fulfil her (or less often his) pledge.

The 'spirit of poverty' doctrine, on the other hand, fundamentally entails a wide-ranging assault on African tradition. According to the doctrine, Africans stay poor, not because of structural injustice, but because of a spirit of poverty. Even though they may be 'born-again', only their souls have been redeemed. The explanation for this is that the ancestral spirit, with its evil influence, still remains in their blood. Ancestors never led a good life while on earth because they were violent, indolent, drunkards, and polygamists, and also because they venerated ancestors and practised witchcraft. Guti never stops emphasizing that these vices are still in the blood of Africans. Any failures in life, as well as the precarious state of the country in general are attributed to this. The inability to accumulate,

but also that fact that one's car always breaks down, barrenness, celibacy, problems in marital homes, divorce, and many other mishaps are attributed to this spirit. Misfortune is passed on from one generation to the next via demonic ancestral spirit. Deliverance, according to the teaching, is the only way to get rid of this spirit. It is received in two ways. The first is through giving. Members are taught that blessing comes through giving in the service of God. Apart from talent giving, members of ZAOGA pay tithes, which is seen as a biblical prescription. They equally make 'love offerings', 'free-will offerings' and 'special gifts.' A love offering is a tax levied on an assembly during the visit of an overseer or an itinerating pastor. It is given to the visitor to supplement his salary. Free-will offerings are collected for things such as assisting orphans, organising crusades, funerals, purchase of choir gowns and acquisition of musical equipments. The special gift or tribute goes to Archbishop Guti during Christmas and on his birthday. The making of these gifts is therefore a precondition for 'deliverance.' The doctrine of the 'spirit of poverty' is most often expounded during the 'talent' period and 'deliverance' is performed on affected members to enable them to work successfully towards fulfilling their 'talent' pledges.

Maxwell argues that especially the doctrine of the 'spirit of poverty' is appealing to members because it claims to provide a solution to their daily problems. The success of the two doctrines hinges on two interrelated sets of reasons. First they are effectively 'marketed' by those with a keen perception of popular aspirations. Secondly, they work in idioms familiar and accessible to a wide range of Zimbabweans. Accumulation has become the formal doctrine of the church and it is preached with regularity. It is encouraged at all levels. Young pastors are encouraged to use their first 'love offerings' to purchase expensive dresses, shoes, ties and so on, so that they can look smart, like a successful entrepreneur. Members of the church believe that if they heed to the gospel, they will be able to accumulate in their turn in order to meet up with realities of modernity. This belief obviously explains why members willingly work so hard to get money to pay to the church.

Maxwell notes that some of the older pastors, who joined the church in the 1960s and 1970s did not support the shift from asceticism to the prosperity gospel. They believed more on the traditional ascetic doctrines. They equally argue that the 'spirit of poverty' teaching suggests that Christ had done 'an imperfect job of redemption'. Some of them, including members of the church, were also not pleased with the personality cult built around Guti, which often merges or confuses his identity with that of Jesus Christ. Maxwell shows also that when the church took the decision to embrace accumulation, it equally decided to be involved in political issues as a strategy for gathering money from

the state and politicians. Politicians from the ruling party were often invited to church functions and the church's leaders supported government positions on major political issues. All this in a bid to extract money from the politicians and the state.

An issue raised in this study, which directly relates to my own work, is the shift from the gospel of asceticism to that of prosperity. Like ZAOGA, mainline Pentecostal churches in Cameroon, (for instance, the Full Gospel Mission, at least in the beginning) adopted asceticism as an economic message but have now switched to accumulation. It is also interesting to point out that the shift in both churches took place at a time Cameroon and Zimbabwe were undergoing an economic crisis brought about by the Structural Adjustment Programs imposed by the World Bank with its attendant hardship for the citizens. This suggests that the prosperity doctrine in Africa works best in a situation of economic hardship. While the churches use it to accumulate, members believe that by giving to the church, a supernatural solution will be provided to their economic woes. A difference is, however, that in ZOAGA's case the transition was far from smooth: it faced opposition from its early pastors and some other members who were not comfortable with the personality cult built around Archbishop Guti. In contrast, within the Full Gospel Mission the transition seems to have taken place much more smoothly. Maxwell however, does not indicate how this opposition within ZOAGA worked out - that is, whether the dissatisfied group left the church or decided to continue its opposition from within. My own study reveals similar situations of doctrinal crisis within one of the mainline churches in Cameroon (the PCC); here the crisis ended with the founding of new churches by members who had doctrinal positions that were opposed to those of the church.

Another point in Maxwell's work, which relates to mine, concerns the political role of the churches. As already indicated, Pentecostal churches in Cameroon do not take part in politics and do not try to extract money from the state or politicians. This marks a clear difference with ZAOGA. Moreover, the position of Cameroon mainline churches differs from that of ZAOGA in that they do not accept the government's position on any socio-political issue if they are convinced that the government is wrong.

### *Birgit Meyer*

Birgit Meyer is professor of Anthropology at the Research Centre for Religion and Society, University of Amsterdam and at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Free University Amsterdam. She has done extensive research in Ghana with particular focus on Missions and local appropriations of Christianity, Pentecostalism, popular video-films and popular culture in general. Some of her works are *"Delivered from the powers of darkness": Confessions of*

*Satanic riches in Christian Ghana* (1995); “*Make a complete break with the past*”: *Memory and post-colonial modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostal discourse* (1998); and *Ghanaian cinema and ‘Africa Heritage’* (1999). What my work has in common with hers is that both cover missionary churches and the effects of their contact with Pentecostalism. We differ in that she has elaborated extensively on the use of the media as a tool of Pentecostal evangelism – an aspect which is less important in my study of the dissemination of Pentecostal ideologies in Cameroon. On the other hand, Meyer pays less attention to the political role of the churches, a topic which loomed large in my research. Two of her works will be discussed here in detail. The first is “*Translating the devil*”: *An African appropriation of Pietist Protestantism: The case of the Peki Ewe in Southern Ghana, 1847-1992*. This work, based on her earlier Ph.D thesis, shows how Africans, in a dialectical interplay of alienation and appropriation, made the Christianity of Western missionaries their own, and how this appropriation is being realized in the past and present. The work focuses on the activities of the *Norddeutsche Mission* (MNG - a nineteenth-century German Pietist Mission society) among the Peki, who are part of the Ewe ethnic group, of South-eastern Ghana and Southern Togo.

Meyer notes that the MNG was the first Western missionary group to be established among the Peki in 1847. It carried out its activities undisturbed until the First World War when it was eventually forced to withdraw as a result of the German’s responsibility for the outbreak of the war. It was replaced by the Ewe Presbyterian Church, (a missionary church but still controlled by MNG), which was later called Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). The EPC however got its independence from the mother church in 1922 and from then its affairs were run mainly by African pastors and teachers, many of whom originated from Peki. The new church maintained monopoly on Protestantism among the people until 1930 when independent churches started emerging. The effect of this on EPC was that it lost many of its members to the new churches. In 1961, as a result of a conflict over prayer healing, a secession occurred in the congregation of the EPC in Peki Blengo, which resulted in the formation of an independent ‘spiritual’ church called Agbelengor (later called The Lord’s Pentecostal Church). In a bid to avoid the loss of more members, the EPC began to Africanise its liturgy. However, towards the end of the 1970s it also accepted a pentecostally-oriented prayer group within the church. These attempts to Africanize the liturgy did not please most local EPC pastors. Especially the pentecostally-oriented prayer group strongly objected to this. These conflicts ended up splitting the church into two EP Churches, the EPC and the EPC ‘of Ghana’, which each claim to be the rightful successor of the MNG.

Meyer has divided this work into two broad parts. The first part runs from when the MNG entered Peki (1847) to 1957. In this part, she makes a detailed study of the practices and activities of the MNG in Peki before it had to leave. She also dwells on the developments that led to the conflict over the spiritual healing group in the Peki Blengo congregation of the EPC and to the formation of the Lord's Pentecostal Church. The second part of the work deals with the conflicting doctrines and practices that made the church split into three independent groups: The Lord's Pentecostal Church, the EPC and the EPC 'of Ghana'. My interest in this book concerns especially this second part because it relates directly to my work on the pentecostalization of mainline Christianity and, more in general, the factors accounting for the upsurge of Pentecostalism in Cameroon. I will therefore focus on this part of the work, with emphasis on issues that relate to or differ from my own work in Cameroon. I shall start by presenting each group and the events and problems that led to its splitting off from the EPC.

a) The formation of the Lord's Pentecostal Church

The Lord's Pentecostal Church started as a prayer group founded by Samuel Yao Amedzro within the EPC congregation in Peki Blengo. The founder of the group, claimed to have been successfully healed from a severe illness in 1958 - after several unsuccessful attempts of curing himself through all sorts of other conventional and supernatural methods -, by a 'prayer group' within the EPC in a nearby village. Before being healed Amedzro had been living a reckless life, indulging in all kinds of social vices like drinking, smoking and dancing; he had had several wives and ridiculed his mother for her loud prayers. He got converted after this healing and after several visions of an angel telling him to 'go and work for the Lord', he changed his name to John Sam Amedzro, which marked his new identity as a convert.

When he returned to Blengo, he founded the *Tekrom Prayer group* within the local EPC congregation. The group attracted even members of the Methodist church (the other Christian group in the area) because it was believed to cure the sick through prayer, exorcise evil spirit and to perform other miracles. It developed certain practices, which were strikingly different from those of the EPC and Methodist church. These included drumming, clapping and dancing, tithing, glossolalia, prayer healing, taking off shoes when entering the prayer hall and fasting every Thursday morning. It was also associated with some taboos; for instance, menstruating women were forbidden from attending meetings and sexual intercourse was not allowed on the night before the Sunday service. Sick people were not allowed to go to a hospital or take medicine, but were to rely on prayer alone. It highlighted, both in its discourse and its rituals, the question of the evil spirit. Its leaders took the existence of the evil spirit as seriously as that of the Holy Spirit, and branded traditional religion as the realm of Satan. Meyer

argues that the tackling of issues involving evil spirit was the major source of its attractiveness, because other churches neglected it.

These differences and the attractiveness of the group caused the EPC and Methodist authorities, but also other Christians, to be hostile to the Tekrom Prayer group. The EPC (the most affected because the great majority of the group's members came from this church) took some measures to deter its members from joining the group. One of the measures was that it stopped conducting Christian *rites of passage*, for instance baptism or burial, to anyone who belonged to the prayer group. But this did not stop the group from growing as it started performing these rituals to its members. Angered by this, the EPC synod took a decision to excommunicate members of the group who continued taking part in its activities. The EPC was not happy to loose members but at the same time, it was bent at maintaining its authority over any group that operated within the church. By this it expected the group to obey the decision of the synod. The group refused and in 1961, it decisively split from the EPC to form the Lord's Church-Agbelengor. In 1985, the name of the church was changed to Lord's Pentecostal Church.

Among the factors, Meyer argues, that accounted for the attractiveness of the Lord's Pentecostal Church was its ability to address issues of witchcraft or satanic forces, which the EPC did not. Another factor was the poor economic situation of the country, which prompted an ever-increasing number of people to search for ways out of their troubles. This was to enable them to maintain or achieve the prosperity that they had until then taken for granted.

#### b) Formation of the EPC

Meyer emphasizes that around the same time that the Lord's Pentecostal Church split off, other independent churches, most of them pentecostally-inclined, emerged. The result was that the EPC was loosing members to these churches. In order to stop the exodus of members, the EPC authorities decided to bring some fundamental changes in its services. These included introducing some elements of African cultures, such as the use of traditional drums, new songs with African tunes replacing the old hymnbook with translations of European hymns, and dancing during the offertory.

Some members of the church were not happy with the decision to Africanise the church. These members formed various prayer groups in many congregations of the church. These groups had Pentecostal tendencies. In a bid to avoid loosing more members, the church instructed the groups to rely on prayer alone and to do away with taboos and objects such as candles and incense, which they believed in. Rather than joining other churches, members of the prayer groups preferred to remain with the EPC in order to bring change. One of their main aims was putting a stop to the Africanization of the church. To them Africanization was incompatible with Christianity. Therefore they tried in 1991 to have another

Moderator of the church elected who, they thought, would stop the Africanization theology. But they did not succeed in this and therefore they decided to split off from the EPC and to form the EPC 'of Ghana' in 1991.

Meyer argues that this phenomenon of independent churches emerging with doctrines that strikingly differed from those of the mission Churches, shows Africans' refusal to accept a continuing domination of the colonised through an effort to stop the suppression and alienation brought about by Western influences in general and by Christianity in particular.

There are two main issues in this work, which are related to my work. One is the issue of spiritual healing as a strong force of attraction to Pentecostalism and the other is the pentecostalization of a mainline church.

On the first point, my research findings in Cameroon reveal that a good number of people join Pentecostal groups because they want to be healed or because they believe to have been spiritually healed already. Many testified to me about this. Unable to treat themselves through more conventional methods, they had gone to Pentecostal churches which claim to heal people spiritually. Similarly, Meyer shows that the founder of the Lord's Pentecostal Church, Samuel Yao Amedzo, had been healed spiritually after trying in vain other methods. After this healing, he not only joined the Pentecostal movement, but went as far as to form a prayer-healing group that became so attractive that it grew into an independent Pentecostal church. Another related point Meyer brings up is the impact of the economic depression in Ghana at the time, which contributed to people turning to Pentecostalism as a way out of their troubles. I make the same argument for Cameroon. Pentecostalism started flourishing in Cameroon when the country was already experiencing a severe economic crisis. Through its prosperity gospel it provided an economic message which apparently appealed especially to the poor. Meyer's work graphically illustrates the attractiveness of this accumulation message among the Pentecostals in Peki.

On the second point, a similar situation of pentecostalization of mainline churches is recorded in my own work in Cameroon. In Cameroon, especially the Presbyterian Church, offers striking examples of such pentecostalizing tendencies. Meyer's works, just as my data, show that this pentecostalization did not follow from a decision of the Church authorities, but that it was rather promoted from inside the church. Just as within the EPC in Ghana, it occurred also in the PCC in Cameroon more than once and under different leadership. The PCC leadership twice opposed such a movement from within and in both cases this resulted in the dissatisfied group splitting off and forming its own church (see below chapter five).

The second work of Meyer to be discussed here in more detail is 'Commodities and Power of Prayer: Pentecostal Attitude Towards Consumption

in Contemporary Ghana', in: *Development and Change* 29, 1998. Her main aim in this article is to show how through ritual of prayer, Ghanaian Pentecostals believe they purify modern consumption, which helps them to handle globalization and consumption of foreign commodities so that there is no more danger of being harmed by the commodities. In this article, she highlights the great desire of the people for Western goods and the problematic (fetishistic) properties of these goods, which might be resolved by prayers to de-fetishize them. .

In this article, using again the example of Peki, Meyer traces the beginning of the consumption of foreign goods in Ghana from the early Pietist missionaries and slave trade periods. During this period, the people had the opportunity of coming in contact with Western goods, brought in by these foreigners. People rapidly developed an interest in these goods, which replaced the locally made goods. Meyer argues that they especially developed an interest in them because these goods symbolized 'civilization'. Consumption of the goods was seen as a mark of modernity and consuming them helped people to construct a new, modern identity. Although early missionaries regarded these Western goods as a necessary ingredient of a Christian lifestyle, they were concerned about people's overwhelming enthusiasm. . The missionaries rather maintained an ascetic position on consumption and for this reason they did not like the interest that the 'natives' developed in these goods. Yet, with time, the influx of Western goods increased rapidly as a result of the cultivation of cocoa, which enabled farmers to acquire money to buy them.

Meyer shows that when Pentecostalism came in, it rather adopted a different position on consumption, which made it attractive. It adopted the prosperity doctrine as its economic message, which made people understand that consumption of the goods was not a sin. She reveals that this message became pronounced from the 1980s when Ghana started having economic difficulties marked by severe starvation. These economic difficulties made Pentecostalism popular because it claimed to provide a solution to the economic hardship. Building on the older ascetic ideas of the missionaries, Pentecostal preachers emphasized that, indeed, these material things by themselves were dangerous to man because the 'devil' uses them to push people away from God. However, they added that through prayer, the devil's hold on these goods can be broken. In this way, Pentecostalism encouraged accumulation but it urged also members to pray over all the material things they had so as to pull out the influence of the 'devil' on them. The implication here is that the 'devil' has control over every material thing unless it is purified through prayer. The belief is that commodities as they are found in the market are truly fetishes; the problem is that most people are not aware of this and regard them as harmless. This evil force in commodities



needs to be stripped off before they could be consumed. In this way, fashionable things like watches, cars, dresses, electronics etc, which the ‘devil’ can use to derail people from God, can be purified and therefore made usable to ‘believers’ with no problem.

Meyer argues that by doing this, Pentecostalism has turned ‘believers’ into vessels of the Holy Spirit, who are capable of fighting the ‘devil’ and his demons through prayer. This has empowered them to transform commodities into mere objects and it has also provided them with the ritual to understand the magicalities of modernity. Meyer contends that this practice is so successful because it takes as a point of departure both the desire to have access to the world and existing fears about the nature of the global market and people’s connections with it.

This study on Ghanaian Pentecostals shows a clear relationship with my material on Cameroon, in the sense that both Ghanaian and Cameroonian Pentecostals embrace the gospel of prosperity. Just like in Ghana, this gospel has enabled them to embrace the consumption of Western commodities and globalization because the two go hand-in-hand. Noteworthy is also the timing when Pentecostals started to opt for the prosperity gospel. Just like with the ZAOGA and Pentecostalism in Cameroon, the message was introduced in Ghana at the time the country was facing severe economic difficulties. A difference is, however, that in Cameroon Pentecostals seem to be less preoccupied by the need to pray over new commodities because they are supposed to be charged with an evil force. Cameroonian Pentecostals do pray for certain things before they are used - for instance, a new car or house. However, the reason for this is not that they believe there is an ‘evil’ spirit already in the commodity, which needs to be exorcised before it is ready for use; they rather pray that God will protect the object while being used. The Full Gospel Mission Cameroon, which I studied especially, encourages members to pray for property, including those already in use; moreover, members did not seem to take this very seriously. .

#### *Rijk van Dijk*

Rijk van Dijk, an anthropologist, is a researcher at the African Studies Centre Leiden. He carried out research on Pentecostalism in Malawi, Ghana, and most recently Botswana. For Ghana where he did most of his work, his research focus has been on the growth of Pentecostalism in this country and its relationship with the Ghanaian diaspora, particularly in the Netherlands. Some of van Dijk’s works are *From Camp to encompassment: Discourses of transsubjectivity in the Ghanaian Pentecostal diaspora* (1997); *Time and transcultural technologies of the self in the Ghanaian Pentecostal diaspora* (2001); and *Religion, Reciprocity*

*and Restructuring Family Responsibility in the Ghanaian Pentecostal Diaspora* (2002).

I will discuss two of his other works in more detail. The first is *Christian Fundamentalism in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of Pentecostalism*, an occasional paper of the Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen, February 2000. While this and other work by van Dijk focuses on the growth of Pentecostalism in Ghana in relationship with the Ghanaian diaspora, my work was rather concentrated on Pentecostalism in Cameroon, its relationship with the economic crisis and politics.

The main aim of van Dijk's paper was to address the issues of the growth and spread of charismatic Pentecostal churches as a fundamentalist turn in African Christianity, their basic features and their essential ideological parameters. Of particular interest for him was the Pentecostals' fascination with modern styles of and appetites for consumption, with new technologies and with achieving a dominant place in the modern sectors of everyday life. Drawing from studies on Ghana and Malawi, his main argument in the article is that this Pentecostal ideology appears to be profoundly inspired by an anti-nostalgic paradigm, a politics of time in which 'tradition' and the 'past' are turned into suspect, if not immoral, sources of political and social power.

To buttress his points, van Dijk has categorised Christian groups under four headings. This categorisation is based on history of each group and its ideological appeal in an African context. These categories are, Missionary Mainline Churches, Missionary Pentecostal Churches, African Independent Churches and the new wave of Pentecostal churches.

Van Dijk notes that before the introduction of missionary churches by the whites, Africans strongly believed in the influence of spirits, ancestors, witches and evil powers and that ritual protection and purification were considered essential in everyday life. When white missionaries came, they could not accommodate these aspects and they told Africans that these forces should be ignored because they did not even exist. By implication, the missionaries could not offer any form of worship, protection and purification that could deal with the effects of these forces, which are real to Africans. Van Dijk argues that this position of turning a blind eye to these forces was in this sense a conversion to modernity in that it demonized so-called 'traditional beliefs'.

The next group he distinguishes - African Independent Churches -, emerged from the missionary churches in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and started addressing such issues. They made the African believe that these hidden forces were real and that Christianity could counteract them. These churches that were founded and led by Africans understood very well the African view of the universe and the forces, which control it; indeed, they built their ideologies

around this. The central elements of these new churches were healing and protection against these forces. They combined healing, protection and purification – as said, traditional African practices, - with elements of Christianity and Christian worship. This made the churches to be more attractive to many Africans than the missionary churches. In the emerging cities of the 1930s and 1940s such as Accra and those of the Copper belt in South Africa, many of these churches existed attracting many town dwellers that had migrated from rural areas to work in the cities. Hence van Dijk argues that the rapid growth of the new African Independent Churches could be explained in terms of their capacity to address the working of the hidden forces that were real to many Africans.

The next wave of churches (Pentecostal) came after colonization. These were not created by white missionaries nor did they emerge from earlier churches; they rather developed out of the influence of black American churches. A characteristic of this new wave is that it combines some features of earlier Pentecostal churches such as speaking in tongues, religious ecstasy, prayer healing, with other elements that are so appealing to the youth. In general, this form of Pentecostalism manifests itself strongly among the youth; moreover, they are township based. They usually have a charismatic leader and make use of modern means of communication: video, radio and magazines.

The author shows that in Ghana, Pentecostal churches of this group have adopted the prosperity gospel, which is so appealing to the youth as their economic message. Famous churches in Ghana, which are of this category, are the International Central Gospel Church of Mensa Otabil and Action Faith Ministries of Nicholas Duncan-William. They tell their followers that Christianity is about prosperity and not poverty. They equally tell them to abstain from traditional practices because they are barriers to development and progress. This implies that they should break all ties with the past and embrace a new religious ideology of modernism. Sometime they perform deliverance on their members in a bid to rescue them from the entanglements of this evil past. As he puts it:

Sometimes people are requested to fill out extensive questionnaires which deal with each and every aspect of a person's past in terms of involvement with traditional healing, shrines, traditional rituals of any sort (initiation, birthing etc), spiritual protection and illness etc. etc. In other words, the fascination with the modern, with modern consumption and the use and possession of modern items is addressed by these Pentecostal churches in the deliverance hours they offer on a grand scale

In Ghana, the Pentecostal groups under this category engage themselves with issues of poverty and progress; but in Malawi, the young born-again preachers, whom the author classifies also under this category, address rather issues of gerontocratic power structures in their society in an attempt to cut themselves off

from tradition. Here, the young preachers do not affiliate with any church but spread their ideology of repudiating the past to everyone. Their born-again ideology revolves around opposing the authority of older people head-on, whom they argue are the authors of tradition. They ridicule the older generation at their meetings or rallies and deplore any inclination to copy their behaviour as far as religious practice is concerned. To them there is no room for any negotiation with the evil past, which is still part of the older generation. The group has a large following in Malawi because of this ideology.

The author underlines the strength of the gerontocratic power structure in the country, as it was reinforced by the former dictator Kamuzu Banda. This structure highly contributed to the emergence of this group. Van Dijk emphasizes that this gerontocratic structure, which was displeasing to the youth, enhanced the emergence of these preachers and the born-again ideology since it helped them to assert the influence of the youth in the society and to undermine the system. He concludes that these new groups are succeeding especially in town because there people no longer want to return to tradition. They rather want to embrace what is modern. Indeed, at present these preachers have paradoxically developed into agents of change, progress and development.

Van Dijk's study could be related to my work in that most Pentecostals in Cameroon have adopted this theology of breaking ties with tradition and are eager to embrace 'modernism'. My data show also that they do not take part in cultural activities and meetings where people contribute money for the development of their various localities. They refuse to attend these because they believe tradition is evil, also in this context. Van Dijk emphasizes as well the adoption of the prosperity gospel in Ghana by the new wave of Pentecostal churches as opposed to the ascetic gospel of early Pentecostal churches – just as in Cameroon. The breaking of ties with the past and the adoption of the gospel of prosperity, as I have argued, enabled religious leaders in Cameroon also to engage in accumulative practices, which was never the case before.

Another point van Dijk brings up, which also played a part in my work on the flourishing of Pentecostalism in Cameroon, is spiritual healing. Many people have joined Pentecostal churches because, in Cameroon as well, these claim to provide spiritual healing while people have increasing difficulties in getting access to medical care due to their financial problems.

The second work of van Dijk I want to discuss is "Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia": Pentecostal Pan-Africanism and Ghanaian identities in transnational domain', in eds., van Binsbergen and van Dijk, *Situating Globality: African Agency in the Appropriation of Global Culture*, 2004.

Van Dijk's main aim in this contribution is to show why a new kind of pentecostally-inspired Pan-Africanist ideology (liberation theology) propagated

by Reverend Mensa Otabil in his work entitled 'Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia', is not gaining ground among all the Ghanaian Pentecostals, notably not in the diaspora in the Netherlands. He argues that the staunch identity politics of the Dutch and their immigration policy has left little room for the assertive proclamation of 'Africaness'.

The first part of this text entitled 'Pan-Africanism and Pentecostal transnationalism' stresses the pivotal role Ghana, over the years, has been playing in fostering Pan-Africanism; it explains also why Ghanaian leaders have been attaching so much importance to Ghanaians in the diaspora. Van Dijk notes that Ghana's first President Kwame Nkrumah (a frontline Pan-Africanist), showed a lot of interest in maintaining ties with the Africans in diaspora in a bid to spread Pan-Africanist ideals and also to keep the memory of the slave trade alive for generations to come. When Jerry Rawlings took over power in 1981, he tried to continue propagating the ideals of Pan-Africanism. For instance, it was the policy of the state to increase the general public's awareness of its cultural heritage as a strategy of enhancing national cohesion. It was also Rawlings' policy to maintain ties with Ghanaians in the diaspora in order to get them involved in domestic affairs. The current president, John Kufuor, acknowledges that the country relies strongly on those in the diaspora for its survival because the amount of money remitted home by those in diaspora has recently become the third largest source of income to the country after gold and cocoa. Van Dijk reveals that over the past two or three decades, Ghana has become a country of large-scale emigration, a form of mobility which in the beginning was focused on places where black communities of former descendants of the Slave Coast already existed; later, in the 1970s, Ghanaians increasingly moved to other countries for job opportunities because of the economic recession the country was facing. The first country they emigrated to for economic reason was Nigeria (Nigeria had a booming economy because of oil) but when Nigeria too started facing an economic recession in the early 1980s, many Ghanaians were expelled from the country and since then, attention has shifted to emigration to Western countries, particularly the United States of America, The United Kingdom, Germany and The Netherlands. Van Dijk notes that over 12 percent of Ghanaians presently live in the diaspora, a percentage, which no leader can afford to neglect. The migration to Western countries was accompanied by a new form of charismatic Pentecostalism (this new form is already discussed in his above work), which was inspired by similar kinds of movements they had come across in Nigeria. As indicated in the previous work, such churches include Mensa Otabil's International Central Gospel Church and Duncan William's Christian Action Faith Ministries, which were founded in the late 1970s. They attracted many people, especially young people from the urban middle class in search of

success and prosperity in life. In the diaspora, other such movements have been founded and some of them set up branches in Ghana, just as some of those founded in that country set up branches in the West.

In the next part of the text van Dijk summarizes the content of the Pan-African message of Mensa Otabil. He first presents the personality of Otabil and the influence he wields in the society because of his outspokenness on political issues, his Pan-Africanist and Pentecostal ideologies, which are presented in form of literature, sermons and on the public media. Van Dijk notes that Otabil, a flamboyant person, is by far the most influential, renowned and outspoken of all the new wave Pentecostal leaders in Ghana. His criticisms of the ills of the society (believed to be caused by the state), as well as his Pan-African sentiments have made him to be like the moral watchdog of the society. His political criticisms, Pan-African sentiments and Pentecostal ideologies combined, have given him some popularity among Ghanaians in Africa as well as in the diaspora. Moreover he provides other vital services to his followers, for instance, through his University and 'Solution Centre', where people go for spiritual healing and deliverance – which in practice are meant to enable the affected to succeed materially and spiritually.

Concerning Otabil's Pan-Africanist ideology, as expressed in his book *Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia* (1992), van Dijk notes that they are very much inspired by Senghor's negritude. They proclaim the worldwide redemption of the black race not by a return to a traditional African heritage, but by an African appropriation of the Bible and the gospel. Otabil teaches that whites have distorted the Bible and its messages to the extent that Africans seem to believe they are a cursed race, which must always be dependent on the white race or beggars. But through the appropriation of the gospel, Africans and descendants of the black race in all parts of the world can look for prowess and pride in being black and having played such a crucial role in saving mankind in Biblical and present times. In the book, Otabil rejects mental 'slavery' and proclaims a 'breaking' of attitudes that do not confirm this quest of self-esteem, initiative and entrepreneurship. Otabil reveals that when he was called into the ministry, one of the things the Lord wanted him to do was to liberate his people from such mental slavery and to lift up the image of the black race through preaching the gospel. Van Dijk stresses that another strategy Otabil has used in spreading the message is establishing the *Pan-African 'Believers' conference*, which is an annual meeting of representatives of African and Afro-American Christian communities and Churches. In 1998, the author attended one of the conferences himself, which had as its theme 'Lift Up Your Head, Africa.' In his opening speech, Otabil expressed his Pan-African ideologies by criticizing African Leaders, including President Rawlings for putting Africans under the yoke of neo-colonialism by

subjecting them to the hard conditions imposed by world financial institutions in the name of structural adjustment programs.

Van Dijk notes that Otabil's message has been very appealing in Ghana and other parts of Africa, and also among some Ghanaians communities in diaspora and for African-American communities. But he argues that in other countries overseas – notably, the Netherlands – the message has not been appealing because of the stringent Dutch immigration policy. His argument is based on the assumptions of freedom to take initiative, develop entrepreneurial ability, travel around the world or live in any part of the world for economic reasons, which are entrenched in Otabil's message. In the case of the Netherlands, van Dijk argues that with the recent stringent immigration policies of the state, it has been really difficult for emigrants to enter the country. Moreover those already living in the Netherlands do not actually have the freedom to circulate. They are strictly controlled and could easily be expelled, in case of committing a crime or being discovered as an illegal emigrant. Emigrants or aspiring emigrants are therefore more concerned with occupying themselves in things that can enable them to overcome these hurdles on their way to success rather than relying on a message that will not solve their problems. He notes that among the Pentecostals in the Netherlands, people are taught that deliverance and 'breaking ties with the past' are the only solutions to the problems. This, he believes, accounts largely for the success of some of these churches in the Netherlands because they are pre-occupied with precisely these practices. Many people go there for deliverance in a bid to succeed.

As evidence that the message has not been appealing to Ghanaian Pentecostals in The Netherlands, van Dijk indicates that Otabil's Church is among the smallest Ghanaian Pentecostal Churches in The Netherlands and that the various magazines related to his activities (such as *Greener Pastures* or the University related magazine *Pathfinder*) do not circulate widely in The Netherlands, nor his tapes or his video recordings.

Van Dijk's argument that 'deliverance' and 'breaking ties with the past' have made Pentecostalism so appealing in Ghana, as already revealed, is also true for Cameroon. My work reveals that Cameroonian Pentecostals equally opt for deliverance whenever things are not going the way they want; they equally emphasize breaking ties with the evil past. Another issue which van Dijk raises, is less applicable to my data on Pentecostal leaders in Cameroon – that is, Otabil's sensitivity to political injustices. As indicated, only mainline church leaders have been outspoken on these injustices in Cameroon. Moreover, the leaders of these mainline churches are interested in liberating Cameroonians not so much appealing to Pan-Africanism as invoked by Otabil, but rather from a political regime which in Cameroon is widely believed to have refused genuine

democratic reforms. Otabil's Pan-Africa message has had no influence among Pentecostals in Cameroon. Moreover, his literature is not known among Pentecostals in Cameroon. My findings show that many international Pentecostal leaders have been visiting Cameroon, but Otabil is not among them. .

The above overview of the works of the five authors shows that they all concur that modern Pentecostalism has embraced the gospel of prosperity as opposed to the ascetic doctrine of classical Pentecostalism. While Gifford argues strongly that the gospel of prosperity had been embedded in traditional African religion and was simply reinforced over the last decades by the American version, the other scholars – using case studies from three different countries (Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Ghana) – rather show how this gospel is disseminated and put to use in the various countries. Each of the studies emphasize that the classical doctrine before the coming of the prosperity gospel was for 'believers' to shun materialism and all carnal pleasures as a pre-condition for entering the kingdom of God; and that only later there was a shift to prosperity. While Maxwell talks of the 'talent' and 'spirit of poverty' teachings being used by ZAOGA leaders of Zimbabwe to bring the message across, Meyer elaborated on the cleansing rituals strategy being applied in Ghana to encourage accumulation while van Dijk highlighted its prevalence among a new wave of Pentecostal churches in Ghana. While Maxwell, Gifford and Marshall hold that Pentecostal pastors encouraged the message largely because of the benefit they would derive from it, Meyer is more interested in how accumulation of modern goods could be purified in order to make them harmless.

In general, it is clear that many leaders have enriched themselves through the new gospel of prosperity; in some cases, this has generated conflicts between them and the members. The outcome of the new message to members and the leaders is that they have to get involved in businesses at local levels, in a bid to accumulate. Van Dijk notes that in addition to this they try to create international networks in order to travel abroad to make money. All authors agree that Pentecostals are now eager to embrace modern fashions in their lifestyles. By engaging in such new pursuits, all authors concur, Pentecostals are projecting a new vision of the world, responding in particular to processes and promises of 'modernity' and 'modernization'. Even the young born-again preachers of Malawi who, as van Dijk shows, do not emphasize the prosperity doctrine, preach a related doctrine, in the sense that it is equally aiming at embracing modernity through breaking ties with the past.

Another issue which some of the authors highlight is that Pentecostals, like mainline Christianity, are willing to become involved in political debates in their various countries. Some of them do render their support to the ruling government for their own interest. Others rather support the opposition while others maintain



a neutral but objective position. Gifford has revealed how in Zambia, Pentecostals groups rendered their support to the Chiluba's administration despite popular opposition simply because he was a Pentecostal. Maxwell's studies among ZAOGA show that the leaders have continuously supported government position on any issue in a bid to extract money from the state and politicians. For Nigeria in contrast, Marshall notes that when the Pentecostals realised they had become a force strong enough to be reckoned with, they formed the PFN, which had as one of its objectives to make the voice of the Pentecostals known on political issues. Indeed, PFN began to denounce the ills of the government. For instance, PFN strongly condemned the decision of the Babangida administration to incorporate Nigeria into the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC); moreover it accused the government of being at the forefront of a series of religious riots that took place in the north, which led to the destruction of churches by Moslems.

Of the five authors, only Gifford in his writings on Liberia dwelled lengthily on mainline Christian churches and their role in politics. He argued that the churches did not play a positive role in bringing the civil war in the country to an end. In contrast, my work reveals that mainline churches played a big role in the democratization process in Cameroon.

Concerning the political role of Pentecostal churches, there is a clear contrast between, on the one hand, the conclusions by Maxwell on Zimbabwe and Gifford on Zambia where these churches support the regime and, on the other, Marshall on Nigeria and van Dijk on Ghana where Pentecostal leaders are rather criticizing the government. My work on Cameroon shows a different trend. It suggests that it is not everywhere that Pentecostals are concerned with political issues affecting their country. In Cameroon, they do not get involved in political debates. While the mainline churches have been making their voices clear on political issues through pastoral letters, sermons and press interviews, the Pentecostals have continuously maintained a silent position

An important common trend in all these cases – Cameroon included – is the switch by 'modern' Pentecostalism to a gospel of prosperity and accumulation.. In the case of Cameroon, earlier groups, which had adopted the ascetic doctrine, shifted to an emphasis on prosperity apparently with little or no resistance from members. But this was different in the case of ZAOGA in Zimbabwe as described by Maxwell. For Cameroon, it is quite clear that this switch came exactly at the same moment as the onset of a serious economic crisis. The scholars quoted above emphasized a similar trend in the other countries. This suggests that a switch to a gospel of prosperity becomes almost inevitable to a Pentecostal group, if it aims at pushing forward in a situation of economic crisis. While these churches in Cameroon have used it as a strategy of raising money,

members believe also genuinely that through it, they can overcome financial difficulties.

Practice is, of course, different. Not every 'believer' is becoming prosperous. They may believe that they 'know the technicalities' of doing so, but unfortunately my findings reveal that many remain poor, just like most other Cameroonians. The argument raised by most of those who did not achieve the expected prosperity was that the 'devil' was the one blocking their way. They explained that the 'devil' is always at work to make God's children suffer so that they turn away from God and follow him. Despite their actual poverty, most of my informants, however, remained optimistic hoping that they will eventually achieve the prosperity because God can always rescue his children from the hands of the 'devil'. By implication, they hold that there is a kind of war between God and the 'devil' over 'believers'. While God wants them to be prosperous, the 'devil' prefers that they suffer; however God is always victorious and this gives hope. Yet there were also others who argued that God sometime makes his followers suffer in a bid to test their faith. The argument here is that a faithful believer will never turn away from God, even in time of difficulty.

This issue of members remaining poor despite the gospel of salvation – and of how Pentecostal churches are dealing with inevitable disappointment – has not been addressed by any of the scholars quoted above. In the countries where these authors worked many Pentecostals remain poor even though they heed the new message. But these authors do not go deeper into the question as to why these 'believers' continue to accept the message, despite continuous disappointment. For me, gaining more clarity in this apparent paradox was one of the main challenges during my field-work. In chapter three I try to formulate an explanation, along the lines sketched above.

## Techniques of data collection

Starting from the objectives of my study, I distinguished four major fields on which I had to collect data. These were Pentecostalism, economic crisis, pentecostalization of mainline Christian churches and democratization. Because of the specificity of each problem and the field situation, the anthropological methods employed varied. It is for this reason that I had to employ various anthropological methods in order to achieve my objectives. The methods employed were participant observation, interviews, newspaper sources, government documents, and historical and scholarly sources. Field-work for the study was carried out in three phases: phase one (October 2001-July 2002), phase two (April 2003-March 2004), phase three (July 2004-June 2006).

Collecting data on Pentecostalism in Cameroon proved very tricky for some obvious reasons. The first is that the field is still very virgin in Cameroon in terms of research. There is very little literature on Pentecostalism in Cameroon when compared to countries such as Nigeria, Uganda, Liberia, Ghana, Zimbabwe and South Africa. With this paucity in secondary data, I was forced to rely extensively on primary data. Secondly, field research on Pentecostalism can be frustrating, if not properly handled, to a researcher who does not belong to the movement. Most often informants are reluctant to co-operate because they would want the researcher to be part of them – that is, convert to Pentecostalism, as a pre-condition for their co-operation. Another reason is that they are often suspicious of the intention of the researcher. Most often they tend to believe that the work is intended to criticise them (and it is true that they are often criticised by outsiders as they too criticise them) or that the researcher could be an agent of someone who intends to use the information against the movement. The first question most of them asked me when I approached them for information was ‘Are you a believer or born-again?’ Though I dreaded being asked this question because I was not a Pentecostal, I managed to give an answer that could please the person to a certain degree. I never tried to hide that I was member of the Presbyterian Church and that I intended to remain so. Yet, I would emphasize also that I strongly sympathized with many of the doctrines and practices of Pentecostalism. I would add also that I often found, when comparing the Pentecostals with Christians of mainline churches, that former do not only know the teachings of the Bible better, but they equally make a greater effort of putting them into practice.

These were some of the problems I faced when I just got to the field. However, these problems were shortly minimised after, through the intervention of a colleague in the University of Buea who is an influential figure in Full Gospel Mission, I got an authorization letter from the Mission Superintendent (highest official of the church) at its national headquarters in Douala on October 9, 2001. Though my colleague intervened on my behalf, the Mission Superintendent still gave me a condition before I could be allowed to carry out research on his church. This was for me to promise that I was to make a copy of the research publication available to the church for appraisal; eventually it would be kept in the mission library. I made the promise and I was then issued the authorization letter. With this letter in hand, I could easily penetrate everywhere I went for information. This letter from Full Gospel mission was particularly important because most of the work was focused on this church and I needed it most, to be able to obtain information especially in other parts of the country where I would be a complete stranger. Until then I had mainly worked in Buea, where I live and where I know some local officials of the church. With regard to

the other Pentecostal churches, I tried to make local rapport with some of them and it paid up. For instance, the Buea regional pastor of Deeper Life Bible Church was very comprehensive because he was my student in the University of Buea, while for the Apostolic Church it helped that a colleague of mine in the University was an elder of the church; she knew very well the purpose of my work and linked me up with the local pastor.

The major methods I used in collecting data on Pentecostalism were participant observation and interviews. To facilitate the work, I made use of a research assistant, who was an anthropology graduate of the University of Buea. Participant observation combines participation in the lives of the people under study with maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data. It is actually immersion in a culture. Ideally the researcher lives and works in the community for six months to a year or more, learning the language and seeing patterns of behaviour over time. Long-term residence helps the researcher internalize the basic beliefs, fears, hopes and expectations of the people under study (Spradley 1980, Fetterman 1989). This was the first ethnographic method I decided to embark on. In making use of this method, I was regular at gatherings that brought Pentecostal members together, for instance, attending Sunday worship services, rallies, crusades, house fellowship meetings and evangelistic campaigns in Buea, observing, understanding and analysing the unwritten 'rules' that govern their interactions. This helped me establish a rapport with them to such an extent that they went about their activities as usual even when I showed up. In Buea, I alternated between the various church groups. For instance, I made a Sunday program including all the groups but giving preference to Molyko Full Gospel Mission because much of the research was to be focused on this church. While observing, I had a notebook to get down some points that could easily slip off my mind; a camera with which I took photographs of events such as spiritual healing and deliverance and a small sensitive tape recorder which even in my pocket would record events such as sermons, testimonies and announcements from a distance without anybody knowing this so as not to attract unnecessary attention (though, of course, I would always ask the persons concerned their permission if I wanted to use their text – all of them were happy that their words would also be put on paper).

During this preliminary stage of participant observation, I had the opportunity of coming close to many members of Pentecostal groups who subsequently were interested in assisting me whenever the need arose. And indeed some of them later became very useful to me. For instance, through them I was able to interview as many people as I wanted. An advantage I derived from beginning the work with participant observation was that it provided me a guide on how I

could go about with the subsequent methods of collecting data. For instance, I was able to select from the group, whom I wanted to interview and on what aspect. Also some of the questions posed during interviews themselves emanated from the reviewing and analysis of information derived from this preliminary phase.

Apart from training an eye for observation, I realised that it was necessary for me to develop an ear for interviewing. Interviews eventually became my most important method because they helped explain and put together into a larger context what I was seeing and experiencing. In Buea, time and venue for interview were made at the convenience of the informants. Most of them took place in the residence of the informant during non-working periods. However some of them – especially those outside Buea – took place without any pre-arrangement because of difficulties of communication. For instance I had a lengthy interview with the missionary founder of the church, Reverend Werner Knorr, who is based in Bamenda without any appointment because I did not have his contact number. Fortunately he was in town the day I went to his home and with the authorization letter from the Mission Superintendent, he opened up to me. The interview, which took place in his parlour, gave me much insight into the church's shift from asceticism to prosperity. I equally had the opportunity of obtaining a copy of a paper on the mission's position on prosperity, which he prepared from him.

I will not claim that all went smoothly with interviews because some of the members, after making appointments for interviews, disappointed me. Reasons ranged from not remembering to other more pressing commitments. Some of the interviews were tape-recorded while others were not. It had been my wish for all interviews to be recorded but some informants turned down the idea of recording their voices. They did not want it because they were either sceptical on the intention of the research or did not just want their voices to be tape-recorded. In such a case, I was compelled to use my notebook in putting down the essentials.

On the pentecostalization of mainline Christian churches, I relied on participant observation, interviews and documented sources. Since for this line of research the Molyko congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon became the central case study, I had to rely strongly on participant observation in this church. I am a practicing Presbyterian and I have been an active member of this congregation for over 13 years. Over this length of time, I have had a very keen interest in observing the pentecostalization process that has been going on in the church. Though Fetterman (1989) argues that in ethnographic research, sometimes a familiar setting is too familiar and the researcher takes events for granted, leaving important data unnoticed and unrecorded, in my own case of the Molyko congregation where it could rightly be argued that I was working on my

own culture, I tried to minimise this as much as possible and with the long period of time, I could easily recollect, for correction, data that I had taken for granted. Apart from participating in the regular Sunday services, I attended mid-week prayer sessions and followed some of the activities of the house-to-house evangelization team whenever they were in action. As one who is so close to many officials of the church, including the pastor, I sometimes persuaded them to allow me to take part in certain meetings where I knew I could collect some information on the pentecostalization issue in the church. For instance, I was a participant observer in a meeting that took a decision to suspend the Christian Youth Fellowship (CYF) group for its Pentecostal practices.

In addition to participant observation of the Molyko congregation, I made use of interviews to gain more insight in the pentecostalization of the church. I had to interview some of the actors of the earlier pentecostalization crisis of the late 1970s and early 1990s (see chapter five) to know what they could tell me about the early problems. For instance, Reverend Bame Bame in Yaounde, Reverends Elangwe and Muyo of Kumba. In the Molyko Church I interviewed the pastors, elders, some members of the Christian Youth Fellowship group and the congregation. The interviews were recorded on tapes.

I also made use of documentary sources. There were a few documented sources on the early pentecostalization crisis of the church. One of it was an eyewitness account of the events and another was a document on the church's position on evangelization when the problem in the Bastos church was at its peak. In the archives of the PCC in Buea, I also had some useful documents on the crisis. For instance, official letters that were read in various churches on the issue and the one suspending the 'revival' group in Bastos and their leaders.

On churches and democratization, data was collected mainly through interviews (including media interviews of clergies), newspaper articles, pastoral letters and a few published materials. To understand the position of the PCC on democratization, I interviewed the Communication Secretary of the church. In addition to that, there were a number of occasions on which, I followed up interviews granted by the Moderator to journalists of local and national radio stations on some pertinent political debates. Whenever I missed any of the interviews, I went to the local station in Buea to have it recorded for me. The same applied to the Roman Catholic Church and Pentecostal groups. Catholic newspapers, (*L'Effort Camerounaise* and *Cameroon Panorama*), *the Post*, *The Herald* and *Le Messager* gave me valuable information on various moves taken by the church to foster democracy in Cameroon. These papers granted interviews to some clergies of the church, particularly Cardinal Tumi, on various political issues affecting the nation. They equally carried some pastoral letters on political issues for which I could not lay my hands on the originals. Pastoral letters (most

had to do with political debates) were a particularly helpful source of information because at the end of every Episcopal conference, the bishops issued a letter, which was well publicised. Due to the regularity (sometimes twice a year) with which they were meeting and issuing the letters, it was possible for me to analyse the evolving church's position on politics. On Pentecostalism, I interviewed some of their leaders (for instance the district pastor of Buea) and members; I equally followed up some of their sermons and reactions, particularly, in 2004, prior to the presidential election of that year when mainline churches were very concerned about the election while Pentecostals showed no concern at all.

Data on churches and the economic crisis was collected mainly through interviews, historical sources, scholarly sources and newspapers. For this topic my study focussed on the Roman Catholic Church and the Full Gospel Mission. To have a proper understanding of what the Full Gospel Mission was doing, I had to make use of the data that I had collected on its ongoing economic message, which I have argued is a direct reaction to the economic crisis. In addition, I made use of interviews to know how members were actually responding to the message. Through this method, I was, for instance, able to get information on the functioning of the training and loan scheme programme of the women of Full Gospel Mission Buea from its leader and some beneficiaries of the schemes. The same applied to the Roman Catholic Women Association of the Buea Diocese, which has a similar scheme. For the Roman Catholic Mission, additional information was collected through annual reports that were written by its president.

To have a proper understanding of the effects of the economic crisis on the Roman Catholic Church in particular, it became imperative for me to make a historical analysis of the situation because only through this approach could one understand the gravity of the effects on the church. It is for this reason that I made use of historical documents, particularly on Catholic education, which I realised was the most affected. These were obtained from the archives of the Catholic Information Centre, Buea and the educational secretary of the diocese who, in addition, was interviewed.

## Outline of the book and overview of the chapters

The answers to the questions this study aims to tackle are provided in five different but related studies that revolve around Pentecostalism and the economic crisis in Cameroon. The studies were carried out between 2001 and 2006. Some of them had already been partly published in scholarly publications within specific settings, in which certain problems, certain concepts or certain approaches, were to be stressed rather than others in compliance with the

editorial guidelines of the volume. Some of the articles published in this book have however been expanded with more case studies so as to further enrich the texts, especially in ethnographical respect. The presentation that follows gives an overview of each study and also indicates how each article fits as a chapter in the overall plan of the book.

*New Pentecostalism in the Wake of the Economic Crisis in Cameroon* is the first study that is presented. It constitutes **chapter two** of the book. It provides a brisk walk through the intellectual landscape that would provide answers to what Pentecostalism provides as an economic message, what accounts for its proliferation and the continuous defection of members of mainline churches to these groups. This chapter discusses the reasons for the proliferation or explosion of Pentecostalism in Cameroon and it argues that the economic crisis affecting the country has played a great role in this. It shows that new Pentecostal groups are coming in with a gospel of prosperity as opposed to the ascetic doctrine of the mainline Pentecostal groups. This message seems to be appealing to the populace as a solution to the economic crisis. The chapter also shows that the mainline Pentecostal groups are moving away as well from asceticism to the gospel of prosperity so as to be equally attractive. The merit of this chapter is that it gives a general picture of the issues raised above though with much emphasis on answering the first two questions. The chapter that follows narrows this argument to one specific Pentecostal church.

*From Asceticism to a Gospel of Prosperity: Case of Full Gospel Mission Cameroon* is the next study presented. It constitutes **chapter three** of the book. The chapter, which further provides answers to why Pentecostalism is flourishing and the continuous defection of members of mainline churches to Pentecostal groups, uses one of the mainline Pentecostal churches (Full Gospel Mission), as an example to show that mainline Pentecostal churches are gradually moving away from asceticism to the prosperity gospel so as to be equally attractive and also to raise money for its activities. Looking at the Full Gospel Mission as an example, and showing how the process took place within it, supports the argument that mainline Pentecostal groups are ever more moving towards the prosperity gospel. Membership in this group is shown to have increased within the last decade and the church is expanding to all parts of the country and beyond. Switching to a new doctrinal position is a crucial decision in the life of a church which can either unite or divide it. It was important therefore to use one of the churches as a case study to see if the transition had been smooth or not and why. This church originally emphasized asceticism as an economic message, but has gradually adopted the prosperity gospel during the period of the economic crisis in Cameroon. It has manifested this by engaging itself in business ventures to raise money for its activities. These businesses, apart from providing money to



the church, have created employment opportunities, which have made the church to be attractive to the unemployed. It encourages its members to engage in business ventures and it tells them that the secret of business success lies in heeding to the gospel of prosperity. Members have responded by getting into businesses.

*A comparative analysis of the reactions of the Roman Catholic Church and Full Gospel Mission to the economic crisis in Cameroon* is the next chapter. It constitutes **chapter four** of the book. The chapter, which deals further with the economic crisis and religious groups' reactions to it aimed at seeing whether the reactions of the Pentecostals (taking Full Gospel Mission as a case study) to the crisis are different from that of the mainline churches (taking the RCC as a case study). Confronting the answer that is provided by Pentecostalism to the material predicaments of Cameroonians with the reactions of mainline Christian churches (who never emphasized asceticism as an economic message) seemed to be an essential step for my study. Leaving this untouched might create the impression that mainline Christianity is folding its hands to the economic predicaments of its members. In support of Nash's statement that '*if a people are poor therefore the church is and must be a church of the poor*' (Nash 1984), the two churches are pre-occupied with reducing poverty among its members. Given that each is becoming self-financing, contributions from members make up a sizeable source of income. Unfortunately the crisis has handicapped many people in providing financial support to the churches and this explains why each church, in order to succeed, tries to alleviate poverty among its members. This has created a reciprocal relationship in which the church overcomes the crisis by alleviating poverty among members who in turn provide the necessary finances for running the church. The success of the church would therefore be determined by the ability and degree to which it reduces poverty among its members. The higher the number of members alleviated from poverty, the more the financial assistance provided to the church and vice-versa. Each has establishments, which employ its members. In addition, each has adopted a training program policy wherein members are trained to be self-employed. For instance, the chapter shows that the women's department of each of the churches is engaged in training women in making certain things that may enable them to become self-employed during this period of economic recession.

*You must be Born-again: The Pentecostalization of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon* is **chapter five** of the book. This chapter, using the PCC as an example, provides answers to why there is a process of continuous pentecostalization of mainline churches. It reveals the influence of Pentecostalism on modern Christianity in Cameroon. I discuss the pentecostalization of mainline churches using one of them as case study in order to illustrate how this process

has taken place and also to confirm a central idea in this study. Just as in the case of Pentecostalism shifting from a gospel of asceticism to that of prosperity, this is a development, which can either divide the church or unite it. It is important to see if this development takes place smoothly or is resisted by any faction of the church and why. If it is introduced from above, how do the members receive it and if it is the reverse, how do the authorities receive it? This chapter provides answers to these questions by focussing on changing reactions within the PCC on the introduction of Pentecostal-like rituals.

*Christian Churches and the Democratization Conundrum in Cameroon* constitutes **chapter six** of the book. This chapter deals with the role played by Pentecostal groups in relation to the ongoing democratization process in Cameroon. The general opinion in Cameroon, also within religious groups – just as among a large number of scholars studying the country – holds that bad governance is at the root of the economic crisis in the country. For this reason, the cry is that democratic institutions, which would usher in good leaders, should be put in place, if Cameroon has to overcome the crisis. Some Christian churches in the country are increasingly articulating a social and political discourse, which they believe is in line with the special Christian vocation to preserve the inalienable rights of humanity by bringing pressure to bear on a regime that has been accused of refusing to embark on genuine political reforms. The chapter examines the examples of the Roman Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon in the whole struggle. It also aims to look at the relation of the Pentecostal churches to this regime and their reactions towards the ways in which this regime is blocking the democratic process - a policy that has led to the persistence of the economic crisis. Having examined what the churches are doing to combat the effects of the crisis for their followers in the preceding chapters, it was imperative to know through this additional study what the various churches say and do about the causes of the crisis that is affecting their members. Simply looking for remedies without examining the causes was to me like giving drugs to a patient without telling him what to avoid in order not to contract the illness again.

## New Pentecostalism in the wake of the economic crisis in Cameroon

Cameroon, like other independent African states, constitutionally defends the right to religious worship. As a consequence of this fundamental aspect of human rights, the last decade has witnessed the proliferation of religious groups in the country, particularly in the Anglophone provinces, and most of them are Pentecostal in their theology. In the literature, the recent spectacular spread of Pentecostalism in many parts of Africa is explained in terms of politics and the pursuit of modernity. However, Pentecostalism also carries with it a clear economic message of individual prosperity and enrichment within a local-global context.

This development unfolds against the background of a serious economic crisis that has left few untouched and has retarded economic progress significantly. Although predictable and indeed foreseen, the crisis seems to have taken the government by surprise, since very little was done to avert or prepare for it. The crisis has exacerbated poverty, misery, unemployment, fear, doubt and uncertainty among Cameroonians. Simultaneously, banks have been facing a lot of liquidity problems and some have been liquidated. The state is faced with difficulties in paying employees and in honouring its other obligations. Public and private institutions have laid off personnel, and continue to do so, while this situation has been worsened as the recruitment of new workers has been drastically reduced. The salaries of workers have been slashed several times and this has inflicted innumerable hardships on them and their families, with a sharp increase in social insecurity. Armed banditry is now commonplace, with bandits

operating in broad daylight and often with impunity. More and younger people and even whole families (cf. the America lottery organized yearly by the American government for other nationals wishing to migrate to the US) are either dreaming of or actually migrating to the West to seek greener pastures. With the added advantage of the Internet, Cameroonians in the Diaspora daily liaise with relatives and friends at home, coaching them in how to avoid the increasingly sophisticated immigration hurdles set up by Western governments. As a strategy to leave the country, young unemployed women now frequent Internet business places in a bid to acquire Western nationals as husbands, even though they have never met or known them previously.

The causes of the crisis are many, complex and difficult for most including academics and other experts to comprehend (Tedga, 1990; Jua, 1991; Konings, 1996; and Nyamnjoh, 1998). Yet government efforts over the years to tackle the crisis have yielded few dividends in concrete terms, despite the official rhetoric and contradictory claims of recovery in circulation. The 1998 and 1999 classification of Cameroon as the most corrupt country in the world, according to criteria elaborated by *transparency international* and its subsequent placing in seventh position from the bottom of the list in the 2000 ranking by the same organization, speaks as much for the government's failure to redress the economy, as for the actuality of the crisis.

Also concerned in the crisis have been the Churches. The Mainline Churches, the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and the Roman Catholic Church in particular, have been making their own spiritual contribution to the fight against the crises. This has often been expressed during sermons in Churches, in interviews in newspapers and in the course pastoral letters. But they have neither succeeded in extracting the concessions they want from the government, nor in convincing their members of the practical relevance of their options and strategies (Titi Nwel, 1993; Medard 1997).

The rise and spread of Pentecostalism during this period of the crisis - as in many other parts in Africa - coupled with the mass defections from the established Churches to the new Churches - could be interpreted as a public sign of dissatisfaction by Christians with the way the established Churches have gone about addressing the spiritual and material needs of their followers. Such increasing disillusionment shows that a swelling number of Christians do not consider it enough for the Churches simply to make critical statements about the worsening economic situation or condemning the few who live in obscene opulence while the majority wallow in misery and poverty. Thus, in the Democratic Republic of Congo for example, when faced with this ineptitude on the part of the mainline Churches and the state, healing Charismatic Churches

have mushroomed in Kinshasa and other urban centers (De Haes 1992; Devisch 1996).

Similarly, especially over the last fifteen years, Cameroon has witnessed the proliferation of Pentecostal Churches, especially in the English-speaking provinces. These Churches include: Full Gospel Mission, The Apostolic Church, The Church of Christ, The Church of God, The true Church of God, The Church of God of Prophecy, The Deeper Life Bible Church, The Celestial Church of Christ, The Cameroon Celestial Church, Assemblies of God, The Africa Evangelization Bible Church, Bethel World Outreach Ministry, Living Word Publishing, The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, Millennial Church, United Pentecostal Church, The Cameroon Church of Christ, The Pentecostal Assembly of God, Living Faith Church Worldwide, Living Word Fellowship, Faith and Truth Fellowship Centre, Christ Church Chapel (International Churches) and The Christian millennial Fellowship. These Churches, which are often denoted as 'Born-again' have a certain number of doctrines in common as we describe below, but there are also important subtle differences in their teachings on wealth and the gospel of prosperity.

The aims of this chapter are two fold. The first is to explore the reasons behind the rise of the numerous Pentecostal Churches in Cameroon and also the problems they encounter. The second is to discuss and evaluate the specific content of their economic message, which make them better able to deal with the present crisis compared to the mainline Churches and the government.

## Reasons for the explosion of Pentecostalism in Cameroon

Before looking at the reasons underlying the growth of Pentecostalism in Cameroon, it would be important to first take a brief look at its doctrines. The doctrines of a religion are very important in attracting people, and those of Pentecostalism have undoubtedly been so attractive for large number of people. In addition to its doctrines, a good number of other factors could be advanced to explain the growth of Pentecostalism in the country.

### *Distinctive doctrines*

Pentecostalism is a recent dimension in Christianity and like the holiness movement in the USA from which it originated in the early 20 century, it believes its doctrines are not new but a commitment to the 'full gospel', that is, they are re-emphasizing the old doctrines as found are in the Bible. Nichol (1996) outlines the old doctrines as:

- a) The biblical emphasis on salvation and justification by faith.
- b) The doctrine of the second coming of Christ.

- c) The stress on divine healing.
- d) The doctrine of the Holy Spirit that empowers a Christian to live victoriously and to witness effectively and whose gift enables a believer to perform the supernatural.

Pentecostals believe strongly in the baptism of the Holy Spirit that occurred on the day of Pentecost among the early disciples. They believe that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples that made them speak in tongues on the day of Pentecost was not only for that day and only to the early disciples. It is a relevant and recurring phenomenon that can be experienced by every believer. Its experience is signified by speaking in tongues (glossolalia). However, they hold that glossolalia is not individual's final goal in his/her religious experience but rather a beginning of a new kind of Christian living that is empowered and graced by one of the nine gifts of the spirit: discernment of error, power over satanic influences, healing and miracle working abilities, wisdom, etc Nichol (1966:15).

Pentecostals believe physical illness should be treated through spiritual means. A good number of them prefer praying to physically ill persons rather than taking them to the hospital. They believe everyone can have this spiritual ability to treat illnesses. This is accomplished by laying of hands on the head of the patient and praying. Testimonies from people healed are usually made during crusades and regular church services. Unlike the other denominations, Pentecostalism with its faith healing doctrine provides a strong solution to the problem of ill health thereby, attracting many people. Many people have been persuaded to join the Pentecostal faith because of their own ill health or that of a relative. In the case of women in particular some have been converted not because of physical ill health but because of family crises resulting from alcoholism, unemployment, or domestic strife.

Pentecostals vehemently condemn the baptism of children as a public profession of faith after conversion. As a practical manifestation of belief, every 'believer' is expected to engage in personal evangelization. They are very charismatic in their preaching and move with their bibles ready to preach to 'unbelievers' displaying a good knowledge of quotable passages from the bible.

During crusades every one is active. They are expected to manifest personal holiness of life, to give up smoking, alcohol, secular dancing and going to theatres, which are considered demonic. Their services are characterized by attractive lively singing and dancing with the opportunity at communion services for extemporary prayers and speaking in tongues, interpretation and prophecy (Marshall 1992, Meyer 1999a).

Pentecostalism opposes vehemently any Church that has connections with 'traditional' beliefs and rituals and Eastern mysticism. It sees these as satanic. Through discussion, their doctrines focus on a direct relationship with God

through prayer, and their Pastors provide a simple explanation of the scriptures. They give everyone the opportunity for more personal involvement in the Church, and they exercise a firm moral discipline.

Although Pentecostalism refers to a specific set of doctrinal tenets, rituals, and practices, a global picture reveals that there are many and varied denominations of the faith. Inasmuch as this may stem from only slight doctrinal differences, there are also those who derive from social and Para church organizations. In Cameroon there are no less than twenty Pentecostal denominations, with a greater concentration in the northwest and southwest Provinces.

Despite the differences, the Pentecostals see themselves as part of a special and sacred community whose identity and unity is aggressively promoted to those who are outside. They consider themselves to be 'born-again' Christians and have often been called as such in Cameroon. This is derived from the cornerstone of Christianity, which requires every individual to repent and 'give his life to Christ'.

#### *Other reasons*

The Pentecostals, unlike other denominations, strongly believe in evangelization as a strong weapon to converting 'unbelievers'. This method has been adopted with great success in Cameroon. As mentioned earlier, every 'believer' is expected to engage in evangelization and also to be active in every evangelistic crusade. Evangelistic campaign rallies are organized on school campuses, or any open ground capable of accommodating large crowd of people. At some rallies video films on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ are screened. Guest preacher(s) are sometimes invited from outside, notably Nigeria, the USA and Europe.

Campaign rallies are usually highly attended and most often provision is made for the 'unbelievers' who, moved by the spirit, have given their life to Christ during the rally to declare openly so that others can see and believe. One of the most celebrated Pentecostal leaders ever invited to Cameroon has been German-born Reinhard Bonnke. On 21-26 February 1989 and 20-25 February 1990, rallies were organized in Kumba and Bamenda respectively and he was the guest preacher. These rallies were attended by thousands of people and many opted for Pentecostalism on those occasions.

An evangelistic strategy often used is the circulation of Christian literature either free of charge or at give-away prices, including stickers. They are famous in the distribution of bibles free of charge to hospital wards, patients, students, prisoners and teachers. These free materials are usually funded or provided by worthy overseas partners.

The new democratic ‘gospel’ sweeping across a good number of nations with its freedom of worship and association has also paved the way for Pentecostalism to flourish in Cameroon. The Pentecostals, with their evangelistic strategies that surpass the mainline Churches have been able to take advantage of this to make converts. In the later part of the 1970s the ‘born-again’ in Cameroon had problems with the government and their evangelistic activities were banned, but when the ban was lifted in the 1980s, they completely recovered their old position and to win many souls.

Another factor that accounts for the growth of the faith is the whole range of economic opportunities that have been opened up by these groups during this period of economic crisis affecting Cameroon. These Churches need a team of Pastors and other workers to work in their establishments. Many unemployed people have enrolled in Pentecostal Bible Colleges not because of the pastoral call to serve but to earn a living. Some of the Churches have enormous projects and establishments such as schools, hospitals and banks. Employment opportunities are offered only to members of the Church, and as such, many people have joined in order to be employed.

Given all of such conditions that have paved the way for Pentecostalism to flourish, the rate would have been much higher than expected but some problems have been acting as barriers to its growth.

## Some of the problems confronting the growth of Pentecostalism

The mainline Churches, older Pentecostal groups and other Religious bodies have always, in protection of their own interests prevented or discouraged the entry of new religious bodies into their stronghold because they very much understand the consequences of such innovation on their own membership. If a new group does succeed in entering, every thing is done to frustrate its activities or block the members of pre-existing Churches from crossing over. Unfortunately, in Cameroon, Pentecostalism is the hardest hit since a greater proportion of these new Churches are Pentecostals. The moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC), is known to have dismissed the development of Pentecostalism as the work of ‘commercial Nigerian preachers’ because a good number of them have indeed been introduced from Nigeria. In the recent past the Church has either suspended or sacked Pastors who “over pentecostalize” their congregations. A good example is the ‘Revival’ issue that started at the PCC’s major congregation in Yaounde led by the congregational Pastor, the Reverend Bame Bame. Bame was suspended from his pastoral duty in the PCC and he later resigned from the Church (Buma Kor 1997).



Before 1992, the government discouraged the formation of associations, including religious groups, for political reasons. But the established Churches, taking advantage of this, used the state security to prevent any challenge being made to their privileged position with the state, thereby guaranteeing their hegemonic control. This was a big problem to Pentecostalism since most of the aspiring new Churches were Pentecostals. The difficulties in the legal registration of Churches caused some new ones to operate under the name of some of the Churches already registered. The USA Assembly of God chose to work with The Full Gospel Mission rather than attempt to open a Church of its own, and the same is true of the United Pentecostal Church (UPC) with the Cameroon Church of Christ (CCC). The law was, however relaxed as from 1992, with the introduction of democracy thus opening the way for the faith.

A pathetic case is that of Nancy Porter (an American) who, after working in Africa for many years, came to Cameroon in 1992 under the sponsorship of the Harvest Heartbeat Ministry in the USA to establish a Church and to open a Bible College. She brought along a young Nigeria Pentecostal pastor called Justice Sunday to assist her. Unfortunately, she died in 1993 and, impressed by the way Pastor Sunday had handled her funeral, the funding body decided to sponsor him to continue the projects. He was harassed by the security service and as a result, was later instructed by the funding body to give up the idea of establishing a Church but to continue the school project that was to be affiliated with the Vision Christian College, California. He succeeded in the project and the school was named The Nancy Porter Bible School in memory of his late mentor.

Internal wrangling with Pentecostals and the blocking of the entry of new ones by the already existing ones is a serious problem hindering the growth of the faith. In the Nancy Porter case, Pastor Sunday insisted that the Full Gospel and the Apostolic Churches should instigate the harassment of other organizations in order to frustrate the opening of the Church. It is obvious he had encountered problems with these groups that did not support the idea.

Governments or institutions have sometimes banned the activities of Churches in the name of peace. In the late 1970s, the Cameroon government placed a ban on public evangelization, especially where loud speakers were used, which was frequently the case with the Pentecostals and this proved an obstacle to the growth of the faith. Recently, the governor of the Southwest province in Cameroon placed a ban still in force on public rallies, especially those using loud speakers, in a bid to frustrate SCNC activities. The University of Buea, in the name of 'campus peace' in 1995, banned the activities of the University Pentecostal students Union (Buea University Christian Union) on the campus.

The attitudes and beliefs of some non-Pentecostals towards the Pentecostals is so disturbing that some people would not feel comfortable associating with the

faith. In Cameroon, it is generally believed (rightly or wrongly) that only frustrated people join the faith. Some call them 'social misfits' because of their practice of avoiding certain places considered ungodly, such as nightclubs and bars, whatever their popularity with other people. Some people capitalize on the questionable behaviour of some of the Pentecostals (behaviour contrary to what they preach) as a reason for not joining.

Financial difficulty has been one of the factors hindering the growth of the faith. A good number of the converts are from the lower social class and with low financial status, and as such they contribute only small sums of money that can be used in the running of the Church and evangelization. Money is needed for evangelization and infrastructure development, which most of the churches lack. Some of the mainline Churches such as the Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and Baptists have used their financial weight to open schools as a strategy to gain converts, and in this they have succeeded. The Pentecostals have few resources and as such cannot make use of this strategy. Supports sometimes come from abroad to some of the Pentecostal churches, but usually not enough to support the work.

Mainline doctrinal conservatism has been another of the factors hindering the successful implantation of Pentecostalism in the country, especially in rural areas and extending into the realm of marriage. Parents have prevented their children from getting married to partners from other Churches because it would entail changing faith. Every village is almost dominated by the mainline Church that was first established there, and hence where the villagers are already versed in its doctrines. It is usually difficult for other groups to penetrate. If any other group is found, it will be small and tend to be dominated by the mainline church. For example, Ngwo (a village in the North West province of the country with a population of about fifteen thousand), has a Christian population of about 89 percent. Of this number, some 94 percent are Presbyterians (the first denomination that entered the village). The rest are divided between Islam, Roman Catholicism and Pentecostalism. These minority groups are dominated by non-indigenes. Some of the external members of the elite who joined Pentecostalism in Yaounde and in other major cities in the mid 1970s attempted several times by means of crusades to introduce their own religion amongst the people but failed. Interestingly, the villagers saw them as people who had mental problems. They could not imagine themselves burning some of the items considered vital to their culture as preached by these people. The unsuccessful attempts caused a majority of these Pentecostals to dissociate themselves from that day onward from anything that had to do with the development of the village. Some have boycotted the village and associate more with the Pentecostal family.

In a bid to stop the further defection of members to the Pentecostal Churches, the mainline Churches have started to introduce liturgical changes and have incorporated some Pentecostal beliefs and practices into their worship. Singing accompanied by clapping and dancing a practice little used earlier by the mainline Churches but a part of Pentecostal worship is a good example. The mainline Churches have incorporated such practices into their own mode of worships to make them equally lively and attractive. In the Presbyterian and Baptist Churches it is now normal for the congregation to respond spontaneously aloud with 'Amen' as soon as the Pastor says 'Praise the Lord' or 'hallelujah', a practice, which was once unique to the Pentecostals.

Most Pentecostal Churches entered the country through the Anglophone section before moving into the Francophone region, though they still tend to flourish more amongst the Anglophone than the Francophone. Many started as spillovers from Nigeria and the phenomenon has a clear Nigerian element. For example, The Lutheran Church of Christ, United Pentecostal Church, The Apostolic Church, The Full Gospel Church, The Pentecostal Assemblies of God, The Church of Christ and Deeper Life Bible Church came in from Nigeria. However, with the preoccupation of the country with security problems, stringent controls have been placed on the entry of these Churches from Nigeria. A good number of fake Pentecostal missionaries from Nigeria have been arrested in Cameroon for involvement in criminal activities, pushing the government to place stringent controls on their activities (Gifford 1998).

Almost all the local co-pioneers of these groups were originally ministers or elders in an established Church who had become disgruntled with a particular aspect either in the worship or the doctrines of the church to which they belonged before the split. An example is The Christian Missionary Fellowship International (CMFI) founded by Professor Zachariah Fomum, who is a University academic and was once an elder in one of the mainline Churches (the Presbyterian Church) in Yaounde and incidentally also the son of a deceased Pastor of the church.

Kumba serves as the birthplace and headquarter of most of the groups in the country. It harbors many of the Churches, amongst which there are The Apostolic Church, Full Gospel, Church of Christ, The Church of God, The True church of God, The Church of God of Prophecy, The Deeper Life Bible Church, The Celestial Church of Christ, Assemblies of God, Africa Bible Church, Evangelistic Centre, and the Millennial Church. The gregarious attitude of the indigenous inhabitants, the freedom of worship that prevails in the area and the alarming Nigerian immigrants population make this town vulnerable to Pentecostalism. Most of the Churches are established by Nigerian immigrants or by Cameroonians who have lived in the USA or Nigeria.

One of the most important reasons for the high presence of Pentecostalism in the Anglophone region is the English language, which makes it easy for these missionaries mainly from English nations to communicate with the people.

Another reason is that many people from this region go to USA and Nigeria either for their studies or economic reasons, and while there they join Pentecostal groups and when they return home they continue not only to manifest the faith but also to convert others. From my observation in Nigeria, a good number of Pentecostals in Cameroon who studied in Nigeria underwent conversion while there as students.

Pentecostalism is more pronounced in the urban than rural areas. It starts in the urban area and then moves to the rural. In major cities, it flourishes very well with keen competition for members not only with the mainline Churches but within Pentecostal groups as well. Some end up phasing out because of the competition, like The Global Frontier Church. Many factors help to explain why Pentecostalism flourishes more in cities.

Firstly, as would be discussed below, Pentecostalism is highly dominated by the young people who, for economic, social and educational motives, leave their rural areas to live in the cities. This partly explains why cities in Africa are dominated by the youth. While living in the cities, for obvious reasons, these young people join Pentecostal groups.

Secondly, when the young people migrate to the cities, the rural areas remain dominated by the adults and the aged. Often, these age groups are of the most conservative concerning the doctrines of the mainline Churches, and they would resist any attempt at defection from the church within which they have been brought up.

The bulk of the churches' adherents are young people, mostly University, Secondary school students and the unemployed. They are usually active on the campuses and once in a while they organize very elaborate religious activities. They also run organizations at some of the Cameroon Universities called Christian Unions (CU). In addition to these, there exists the Cameroon Youth for Jesus (CYJ), a movement founded by the Pentecostals youth and meant to be ecumenical but in practice it operates only amongst Pentecostals young people. The mainline Churches dissociate their young people from the movement. Movements such as these and their activities have attracted a large number of young people into the faith in the country.

The mainline Churches are dominated by the older generation and leadership is most often monopolized by this generation in a bid to keep the young people in their place. To a certain extent, young people see the Pentecostal Churches as their own space where they can exercise some responsibility. The Pentecostals also address the problems facing young people more than others do. One such

problem is that of marriage, and the Pentecostal Churches have been places where it is believed that good partners might be obtained. Many have joined precisely for this reason or have been brought in by their partners (Gifford 1998; Marshall 1992; Van Dijk 1992; Meyer 1999b).

For women, particularly those less educated or poorer individuals, becoming 'born-again' is an assurance that their position in the family and their relationship with their husband guarantees mutual respect, marital fidelity and sharing of family responsibilities. Husbands are less likely to abuse their wives or cheat on them, giving them instead respect assisting in child rearing and spending plenty of time with the family, thereby avoiding unnecessary expenditure out of the home on drinking, entertainment, or other women. Marital problems are often taken to the Pastor for adjudication. The Pentecostal stress on the nuclear family relieves the young couple of the pressure from the In-laws, especially the wife. The choice of marriage partner rests on the prospective couple rather than on the family, thereby liberating the young people from unwanted arrangements might otherwise have been made by the family. The proscription of fornication is of advantage, particularly to the young girls, because it enables them resist unwanted sexual pressures, which are regularly brought to bear on them in case they need jobs, good grades or secure relationship. Young women therefore find this community a space where they can move with relative freedom and dignity, as well as fine psychological support.

Some of their music of the Pentecostals is influenced by western rhythms such as soul, rap, and reggae. This could be an opportunity for young people, who because of financial hardship cannot go to nightclubs, discos or concert for entertainment, to see these Churches as providing a forum for parallel music. There is scarcely a funeral in the Northwest and Southwest provinces, where Pentecostal music from Nigeria does not dominate in entertainment.

## The economic message of the Pentecostals

When an individual or a group is deprived of certain things considered important to the society such as education, food, nourishment, money (as is the case in Cameroon as the result of the economic crisis), two religious doctrinal alternatives could be used to help overcome deprivation:

- a) The implementation of a doctrine in which some or all of these are considered meaningless or of low value could be adopted.
- b) The implementation of religious doctrines through which these are considered important and can be acquired.

The economic message of the Pentecostals revolves around the above alternatives. Each Pentecostal group adopts either of the methods as an economic message and for the accumulation of wealth. The two approaches have for a long time persuaded the Pentecostals to shun liberation theology, with the first making them believe that earthly things or struggles are not important and the second making them to argue that God provides a solution to every problem depending on the faith of the individual or people in general.

Studies reveal that the new waves of Pentecostal groups in Cameroon have now adopted the second alternative. Early Pentecostal groups in the country such as The Apostolic Church and Full Gospel Church introduced in 1949 and 1961 respectively, had placed their emphases on the first alternative, but with the economic crisis, they have shifted their attention to the second. Before the economic crisis, popular bible verses such as 'Blessed are the poor' were frequently made use of in sermons. Churches were rich because they received donations from abroad and from the Government, and could they easily carry out their missionary activities without asking for assistance from members. With the crisis, and with the less financial support coming from abroad and the government, these Churches are unable to meet their objectives. As a solution, emphasis has been shifted to the second alternative and bible verses such as 'Jesus came to bring abundant life and prosperity' are made use of in sermons. In an interview with Billy Lubansa (an international Pentecostal Evangelist in Cameroon and one of the new waves of prosperity preachers) I was told that 'Jesus came to bring abundant life, prosperity and money is not evil. People must be taught to give it for the spread of the kingdom of God.' This change of emphasis explains why most Pentecostal business establishments in Cameroon started only when the economy was in a state of crisis.

- a) Regarding the first alternative of placing a low value on material things or considering them as meaningless, this was based on the rigorous and ethical provisions of the bible. A believer was not expected to go to the cinema or nightclub but to dress modestly, with the women avoiding the use of make-up. A man should not taste alcohol or smoke. The biblical citation 'It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God' was often made use of by some Pentecostals to defend this position and to discourage the accumulation of wealth. These Pentecostals made poverty more tolerable by offering a reward for suffering and promising redress for injustice in the afterlife. Talcott Parsons (Haralambos 1985) makes this clear when he argues that one of the major function of religion is to 'make sense' of all experiences, no matter how contradictory they may appear. An example is suffering, 'Why must man endure deprivation and pain and so unequally and haphazardly, if indeed at all?' The bible provides a range of answers e.g. suffering is imposed by God to test a person's faith; it is punishment for sin, suffering with fortitude will bring its reward in heaven. Suffering thus become meaningful (Haralambos 1985). In the University campuses where there are many Pentecostals, it is easy to identify those who still adhere firmly to all or some of

these teachings by their simple way of life and abstention from certain practices considered evil such as smoking, drinking and going to nightclubs.

- b) With regards to the second alternative, the Pentecostals adopt a method by which they believe they can have possession of whatever they want, a belief which is based on prosperity theology. This theology teaches that the spiritual and material fortunes of a 'believer' are dependent on faith and on how much he gives spiritually and materially to God or his representative (Marshall 1992, 2-32, Gifford, 1991, 10-20). This implies that the riches of a 'believer' will be a consequence of his faith in God (Mark 11: 23, Deuteronomy 20: 30, Philippians 4: 19 etc are texts usually used to support this message). One needs only to believe and spend money or material things in the service of God and the special gift of the Pastor or God would provide him with everything. It is like saying: 'you prosper by planting a seed in faith, the return on which will meet all your needs.'

The prosperity gospel is an American creation, its historical development is traceable through well-known evangelists like E.W Kenyon, A.A Allen, Oral Roberts, T.L Osborn, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, etc. Its rapid rise and diffusion in the 1970s can be explained by its role in establishing the empires of the media evangelists. In the USA during the 1960s and early 1970s when the economy was booming and there were many job opportunities, Pentecostal leaders propagated the gospel as a means of gaining funds for evangelization, to build media empires and Churches in support of their leaders. This proved very successful because enormous resources were made available to meet the above objectives (Gifford 1998: 39). The prosperity gospel has become widespread in Africa, not only among the Pentecostals but also with the mainline Churches. Marshall (1992) in her study of the Pentecostals of Nigeria reveals that it is associated with the outreach of American evangelism in the continent because many Pentecostal pastors received their training from the Bible Colleges run by the prosperity preachers in America, on either a full-time or correspondence basis, for instance, Rhema Bible College of Kenneth Hagin.

This theology is disseminated through literature diffusion, Bible Schools, preaching during crusades or at Churches and by any other available means considered proper in the face of God. To the Church leaders, the gospel is important because it provides revenue through which they can survive economic hardship. It is widely made use of by celebrated Pentecostal leaders in Africa like Arch Bishop Idahosa of Nigeria, Handel Leslie of Uganda and Duncan William of Ghana. It has proved successful in persuading people to meet the expenses of very costly ministries and to raise money for Church projects throughout Africa.

The Reverend Billy Lubansa has played a great role in spreading the prosperity theology amongst the Pentecostals in Cameroon (he gives as his 'spiritual mentors', Ray McCauley, Rienhard Bonnke, Kenneth Copeland and Kenneth Hagin). Nevertheless, he has complained that the people of Cameroon were never taught about giving:

At the offering they would give brown coins (5,10,25 CFA); 'God would not mind', the pastors used to tell them. I started breaking that teaching. I gave a seminar 'Being delivered from the power of poverty' (for which he used the books of Copeland). An Apostolic Church pastor told me that the missionaries had told them, 'You don't need education, or big Churches, because you are going to heaven'. This was implanted in them. We have to uproot all those things. They used to preach 'Blessed are the poor'. They must change to 'Jesus came to bring abundant life, prosperity'. They taught that money was evil. We need to have it to spread the kingdom.

Lubansa accomplishes the uprooting of the old teaching through his programme on the local radio station, Buea, through conventions that are usually highly attended, with international guest-speakers and through invitations to speak at other Pentecostal Churches.

The new wave of Pentecostal Churches is arriving with the same message of prosperity. The Nigeria Assemblies of God, which calls itself The Pentecostal Assemblies of God in Cameroon, is dominated by young Nigerian businessmen. The prosperity message is widely preached by their Pastors. This message certainly seems geared to such people. In his preaching in October 1995 on the theme 'Determine to change', from the text Daniel. 1: 8, the Yaounde Pastors said:

If you are determined to come out of poverty, work. And work can be anything, even selling plantains, and God starts blessing you. Your business can be cleaning floors. God does not bless empty hands.---- do everything to become rich. Do everything God says you should do and become rich.---- You go to a night club all night, and you are too sleepy the next day. You have a new girl, a bottle of beer, a stick of cigarette everyday, what is your gain? 'Say I am determined to change today'. When you turn to Jesus, Jesus walks in with salvation, forgiveness, prosperity, blessing, anointing, the presence and power of the King of kings.

The new wave of Pentecostals now encourage 'believers' to work hard and accumulate wealth that could be used to prosper the Church. The gospel has encouraged church members to engage in competitive business ventures with 'unbelievers' in both national and international level. The women get involved in small enterprises. Some go from one office to another selling snacks, house decoration items prepared by themselves, cosmetics, jewelry etc. Some of the Pentecostal women in the civil service, who do not have the opportunity to go from office to office, keep their own business items in their offices where customers come for them. They place no restriction on their own dressing and on the accumulation of wealth. Members dress up gorgeously for church, the men in expensive wristwatches and the women with elaborate hairstyles. 'Believers' can drive in nice cars and have expensive foreign goods. When the ambition of accumulation is achieved, and manifested in daily life, it is regarded as the goodness of God to his people because of their faith.

The Churches have now, unlike before the crisis, gone into business ventures ranging from banking, printing, the sale of Christian literature, and education to the general area of health. The Zion Credit-Financing bank with branches in



many part of the country is run and owned by the Pentecostals. The Gospel press in Bamenda, run by the Full Gospel Church, started before the crisis and was solely for the printing of Christian literature that was distributed free of charge but now it does work on a commercial basis for the general public. The Full Gospel Church runs a Technical College in Muyuka, a Secondary grammar school in Bamenda, a Teacher-Training College in Mbengwi, and three primary/nursery schools in the South West province. It also runs four health establishments (two in the South West Province, one in Yaounde and another in Garoua) The Apostolic Church runs a Secondary school in Bamenda and a hospital in Banga. All of these establishments started during the period of the economic crisis and only 'believers' are employed to work at them. The Apostolic and Full Gospel Churches have been emphasized here because they constitute the old wave of Pentecostal groups that adopted the first alternative to begin with and later shifted to the second with the arrival of the economic crisis. The prosperity gospel has motivated the Pentecostals to engage in various business ventures in a bid to overcome the full impact of the economic crisis.

In addition to the accumulation of wealth through the performance of economic activities, certain Pentecostal beliefs and practices place them at an advantage over non-Pentecostals in such accumulation.

Firstly, the Pentecostals' emphasis on making a complete break with the 'past' (Gifford 1992; Marshall 1998, Van Dijk 1992, Maxwell 1998) has gone a long way in making it possible for them to accumulate large amount of wealth for overcoming the economic crisis. Since the government can no longer carryout development in most areas, most communities form cultural and development associations to mobilize members towards self-reliance development. This entails providing resources that could be used in carrying out local development projects such as bridges, roads, cultural halls, water supply, electricity, schools and hospitals. Contributions from and levies on members in support of such programmes are often very high. A greater number of the Pentecostals do not associate with these groups and make no contribution. The reasons for not joining range from turning their backs on African culture, often included in development programmes, to avoiding association with 'unbelievers'. Some do not associate with family members considered 'unbelievers' and as such have no financial obligations towards the needy ones, despite the African extended family structure in which members are usually mobilized to assist everyone. This abstention reduces their financial burden as compared to those who have to provide for such things.

Secondly, the Pentecostal belief in re-orientating one's life by abstaining from certain practices considered vices permits the accumulation of resources. These

vices include high expenditure on drinking, smoking, going to discos, cinemas, and theatres

It is obvious that the prosperity gospel is having a socio-political impact on Cameroon. By telling the people that material prosperity is provided by a 'miracle' working God, or alternatively, through the spiritual law of prior giving, it simply ignores the so numerous political and economic problems that have brought poverty to the country. These include corruption, dependency economy, fluctuating prices, deforestation, military spending and overpopulation. This does little or no good in the search for solutions to these problems.

The doctrine implies that only 'believers' will prosper materially in society. This, in turn, does not encourage a wider social responsibility in society, as everyone's success is a function of his or her personal relationship with God. The 'believer' would have it as a duty, to convert the 'unbeliever' so that through his/her own faith, he/she can prosper materially.

## Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, the shift in emphasis from the first alternative to the second was inevitable for Pentecostalism to succeed in the 'competitive market' of religion in present-day Cameroon. The first alternative was more fundamentalist and has very little place in a country plagued with problems and with an obvious need for socio-economic and political transformation. In the first alternative, the Pentecostals approached the bible uncritically. In general, they loved quoting the Bible, and they referred to it and supported any position by alluding to it. This is also true of the mainline Churches, though in more moderated tones than was the case with the Pentecostals. The Pentecostals adopted a fundamentalist position on the accumulation of wealth just as they did on the use of alcohol and on associating with 'unbelievers'. In Cameroon such a position cannot face up to the realities of the society and for social reasons it cannot work. Very few Cameroonians would abstain from such vices for religious motives, an observation that would imply that the majority would have been unable to opt for Pentecostalism. A greater majority would want to accumulate wealth, drink alcohol, and for various reasons associate with other members of the society. Pentecostalism was unattractive to many because of its stance on these. Hence, in order to attract members, it had become obvious to a large number of Pentecostal groups that such activities should be accepted in moderation and with supportive passages from the Bible in their defense. For example, on alcohol, a little could be taken and on the accumulation of wealth, various reasons were discussed as to why it should not be seen as evil. This

moderation has shifted the emphasis from the first theological alternative to the second, giving Pentecostalism a new and attractive look in Cameroon.

On the issue of non-involvement in politics, some Pentecostal members seem to have realized that it would not pay off for the entire nation if they maintain such a position. These members, over the last few years, have become sensitive to injustices and they take part in elections and condemn certain political ills of the government. They acknowledge that poor leadership has caused most of the socio-economic and political problems in the country and they believe that in addition to praying for the nation, it is necessary to join in the fight for good leadership through other means such as participating in political elections. They believe a God-fearing leader would rule well and it is important to support such a candidate. The involvement is however at individual level though not a prescription by the church. Unlike the mainline churches, which have often taken a position on political issue through pastoral letters, sermons and interviews, Pentecostal churches have always maintained a peripheral position on politics. However, each group, as a body, involves itself in politics only in defense of its official teachings and interest. It has been argued that the social, political and economic problems facing Cameroon are as a result of bad governance. Our leaders do very little in support of the interest of Cameroonians and care less about their sufferings. For reasons such as these, Cameroonians would not support members of any religious group that maintains a neutral position on the suffering masses, which is attributed to political mismanagement. The mainline Churches have become popular because they continuously play this role through sermons and pastoral letters, which has never been the case with Pentecostal churches. The involvement in politics by some Pentecostal members has undoubtedly played a role in attracting some people to the church, though the churches are peripheral. This is because many people no longer see their members as people who do not want to see change in Cameroon.

It is likely that the longer the economic crisis persists in Cameroon, the higher will be the number of people opting for Pentecostalism. A greater majority of Cameroonians find it difficult in the ongoing economic crisis, to afford Western medical care and if an illness persists, they tend to turn to spiritual healing, which is believed to be best performed by Pentecostalism. Another important factor is the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which is ravaging the country at a terrific rate. A sizable number of Cameroonians have yet to believe in the existence of HIV/AIDS. Most frequently they attribute such an incurable disease to witchcraft, which they also believe Pentecostals can treat spiritually. Some of the victims who believe in the existence of the disease join the Pentecostals for spiritual healing after moving from one hospital to another with no success. This helps to explain why Pentecostalism has scored a remarkable success during this

period of crisis in the country. It also suggests that the greater the number of peoples subsisting at poverty level, (and the longer the crisis persists) the greater the number of people who will opt for Pentecostalism. It is very likely that when the economy of the country improves and the rate of HIV/AIDS reduced, Pentecostalism would not be as significant as it is at this moment.

## From asceticism to a gospel of prosperity: The case of Full Gospel Mission Cameroon

Within the last decades in Africa, there has been a spectacular rise, which is still going on, in the number of newly pentecostally-oriented churches and prayer groups articulating a gospel of prosperity. Some of these groups often carry an epithet like 'Global' or 'International' in their name, which advertise the prosperity gospel and criticize the theologians of the established mission churches for advocating an ascetic stance characterized as 'to be poor to be holy' (Marshall 1992, 1998, Gifford 1992, 1997, Maxwell 1998, Meyer 2002 and Akoko 2002). Accumulation is the formal doctrine of these churches and it is preached with great regularity. If a 'believer' is not accumulating, it is believed that he or she lacks faith. While this development is going on, some mainline Pentecostal groups are moving away from the classical doctrine of asceticism to the prosperity gospel with resistance from some of their members and others are successfully achieving this transition with no resistance. One such examples, is the Zimbabwe Assembly of God Africa (ZAOGA), which achieved this in the 1980s, but with tough resistance from the older generation of pastors who had managed the church from its foundation in the 1960s. The old generation pastors of the church were not happy with this development. They accused the young pastors of introducing a doctrine which only did not comply with the biblical teachings on suffering as a necessary part of a believer's life, but also made material wealth and not holiness as a basis for position in church thereby leading to the rapid promotion of businessmen whose lives fall short of Pentecostal expectations (Maxwell 1998). There is, however, a growing body of literature on modern Pentecostalism embracing the gospel of prosperity (Marshall 1992, 1998,

Gifford 1992, 1997, 2001, Meyer 2002, Smith 2001, Hunt 2002, Kramer 2002, Coleman 2002) but very little on the shift of mainline Pentecostal groups from asceticism to the gospel of prosperity. This work could be credited that it is among the few works that have focused on the shifting of a mainline Pentecostal church from asceticism to a gospel of prosperity.

However, the prosperity message itself is so broad in biblical term. It is taken to include prosperity in economic and material terms. It also involves prosperity in body, soul and spirit, which has to do with issues such as healing ability, peace of mind, victory over Satan, blessed children, protection and deliverance. According to the gospel, God has met all the needs of human beings in the suffering and death of Christ, and every Christian should now share the victory of Christ over sin, sickness and poverty. A believer has a right to the blessings of health and wealth won by Christ, and he or she can obtain these blessings merely by a positive confession of faith (Gifford, 1997). Its usage in reference to material prosperity dominates the discourse to the extent that whenever scholars and material prosperity theologians or those church ministers who teach that all Christians should be materially prosperous refer to it, they undermine the other aspects. Several well known church ministers from the United States of America helped to create this popular form of usage, most notably E.W Kenyon, A.A Allen, Oral Roberts, T.L Osborn, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland and John Avazini. Each of them has made a contribution in the propagation of this gospel. For instance, it was Allen who first made it an aid towards fundraising; he was the first to teach that *God is a rich God, and that those who want to share in his prosperity must obey and support God's servant-the speaker himself*. Oral Robert added the idea of seed faith; *that you prosper by planting a seed in faith, the return on which will meet all your needs*. The gospel has proved very successful among the religious entrepreneurs (otherwise called Get-Rich-Preachers) who constitute the media evangelist all over the world, for its 'seed faith' idea has brought in the enormous resources needed to sustain these extremely expensive ministries and the ministers. Indeed, it developed in those circles precisely because it was so functional in this regard. However, it is not only its functionality but also its general socio-economic context that is significant in this respect. Though the gospel is broad, my main concern here is to use it in the context of material prosperity.

Full Gospel Mission Cameroon is an example of another Pentecostal church, which has undergone this kind of transformation from asceticism to a (more or less) gospel of prosperity in the last decade. In its beginning, this church adopted an ascetic doctrine, which did not give room for accumulation but it has now, to a larger extent, also embraced a gospel of prosperity, which has opened the way for members and the church itself to accumulate (Akoko 2002).

It is the oldest Pentecostal church in Cameroon after the Apostolic Church and the biggest in terms of adherents and establishments. Reverend Werner Knorr introduced this church, which is of German origin, in Cameroon in 1961 under the sponsorship of the United Missions Friends Inc of Germany (Knorr 2000). According to statistics from the office of the National Superintendent of the church in 2000, it has a total membership of roughly 59,062 with 518 assemblies (local churches) located in all provinces of the country. Membership has been increasing rapidly and the Mission has penetrated all nooks and crannies of the country and beyond. The high rate of growth can be attributed to some of its doctrines and practices such as divine healing/protection, good leadership, political liberalization, evangelization strategies, its caring culture towards the needy and a shift from complete asceticism to a gospel of prosperity.<sup>1</sup> The church has gone down in record as the first in Cameroon, which has extended its activities beyond the national frontiers. Its presence is felt in Chad, the Central African Republic, Nigeria and in its future projects plan (5 years) 2001-2005, it intended to penetrate the Republics of Congo and Gabon before 2005 though the years elapsed without it attaining this goal due to financial constraints. It also goes down in record as the first Pentecostal church to have been introduced into Nigeria from Cameroon instead of the usual tradition of being introduced into Cameroon from Nigeria (Knorr 2000).

In a release that was prepared by the Missionary founder of the church, Reverend Werner Knorr, Full Gospel Mission embraces asceticism as an economic message, while leaving the door open to accumulation.<sup>2</sup> An issue that can be underscored with the message is that it gives every biblical explanation to justify asceticism and accumulation amongst 'believers'. In justifying asceticism in the message, it is stated that *through greed our hearts can be bound by worldly possessions, so that they can hinder us in our Christian walks*. The statement implies that the Mission believes earthly possessions (wealth) can exercise an evil and negative influence on its beholder. For instance, many people have fallen into the temptations of stealing, defrauding, smuggling, counterfeiting of money, or unfaithfulness in making offerings and correct tithes in order to get rich, (covetousness or love of money). It is this danger of greed or covetousness, which someone who possesses wealth or has the desire to do so is exposed to, that makes the Mission to embrace asceticism.

The following extract from the message reveals that the church also embraces the gospel of prosperity:

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<sup>1</sup> For detailed explanation of the factors, which have accounted for the rapid growth of the church, see, for example, Akoko R. (unpublished) 'An overview of Full Gospel Mission Cameroon and the factors accounting for its rapid growth.'

<sup>2</sup> See, 'What Does the Bible Say? Our Position on Prosperity' by Reverend Knorr

For those who loyally pay their tithes and give sacrificially, He (God) gives the wonderful assurance, 'Try me now in this, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it'. Let us also understand that, if some Christians become rich, it may be due to God's special gifts to just them, because He has accorded them a 'ministry of giving'. As He can trust them for their faithfulness and liberality, He is giving them material possessions in greater abundance, so that they in turn can bless His church and others.

It can therefore be argued that the Mission does not out rightly want its followers to remain poor or that they should give up their riches when they want to follow God. It believes that if a person is able to overcome the temptations inherent in accumulation, he can accumulate as much as possible but if he cannot, he should stay in poverty in order to serve God better.

The message is less than a decade old and it should be noted that the Mission adopted complete asceticism from the beginning, with no compromise on accumulation but with the recent opening of the door to accumulation, the church as a body and its members have engaged in materialistic practices as any other group or person in the country. However, the transition in this church presents an interesting analysis because unlike the other groups such as the ZAOGA, it has been relatively very smooth, with no resistance from other members of the church and it has been one of the factors, which have attracted more people into the church. Secondly, unlike other groups, which either maintains complete asceticism or the doctrine of prosperity as an economic message, this church tries to strike a balance between the two options, though in practice, the latter dominates. Thirdly, being an attractive force and the fact that the church is the biggest Pentecostal group in the country, the transition could affect other Pentecostal groups (particularly the ascetic groups whose membership is dwindling because of complete asceticism), in that they too may want to copy it in order to be attractive. The aim of this chapter is to analyze this change from complete asceticism to a doctrine of prosperity, which has taken place within this church in Cameroon.

## Transition to prosperity

Asceticism, as practised by Full Gospel Mission, was based on the biblical stress on 'holiness' and on the passage *blessed are the poor for they shall inherit the kingdom of God* through which the church aggressively embraced poverty and a retreat from the symbols of material prosperity. It placed a lot of emphasis on perfection, strict personal ethics and biblical inerrancy. In this light, the ways of the 'world' were considered as the ways of sin, so 'believers' were exhorted to shun all unnecessary material and carnal pleasures in compliance with the teachings. Strict dress codes were enforced. All the members could be observed



avoiding expensive dressing and material things even if they could afford them. It was unacceptable for a woman to wear a trouser, jewelry, or make-ups and they were always expected to cover their heads especially when in church or at prayer. Keeping very long hair and styling was also unacceptable. Men were to put on simple dresses; unflared trousers (despite the fashion of the time) and plain shoes (acceptable heel heights were specified).

Nde (1998) argues that the outward appearance of a woman was more affected by the ascetic doctrine, as they could easily be distinguished from other women through their heads, no make-ups or jewelry and simple dressing. What is certain is that, though this church had some wealthy or relatively prestigious members, wealth and fortune was not the basis for prestige or status in the church community, which remained remarkably egalitarian in terms of the rigid social barriers, which exist in the broader Cameroonian society. The basis for rising in the ranks of the church hierarchy was largely the demonstration of piety, denominational fidelity, and possession of 'spiritual power', rather than age or wealth.

Anyone who listened to their sermons at the time could easily recall that they were highly characterized by the condemnation of 'sin', which was believed to be deep-rooted in accumulation and in the quest to become rich. Practices such as lying, cheating, stealing, quarreling, gossiping, giving and taking of bribes, drinking alcohol, fornication, beating of spouse, losing of tempers or denying assistance to other members in need, were considered as 'sin'. Limited contact was allowed between members of different sexes. Marital fidelity was a central tenet and divorce was not permitted.

In compliance with the preaching, the Education Secretary of the church revealed to me in an interview that the church as a body abstained from accumulative practices such as engaging in business ventures. This contrasted with the mainline churches, which were highly engaged in business ventures in a bid to raise income for their activities. These practices made the society to believe that Full Gospel message was meant for the poor and frustrated, in fact the scum of the society (Nwanchan 2001).

The gospel of prosperity, as practised now, takes the form of not removing members or the church as a body from the avenues of accumulation. This has had a tremendous impact on members in that it has re-oriented their economic lifestyles from asceticism to accumulation. There are no restrictions on dressing, nor is wealth seen as ungodly; on the contrary, fine clothes, nice cars, foreign goods are common currency. The pastors themselves promote and foster this image.

On the part of the church, it has engaged in accumulative practices, which never used to be the case. Within the last decade, it has gone into many business

ventures in the areas of Education, Health, and Printing. I visited some of the establishments and each revealed an economic motive behind its creation.

From the interview with the Education Secretary of the Mission, the church runs 6 nursery and primary schools in the towns of Muyuka, Kumba, Tiko, Bai-Koke and Awing. These schools started after 1998 and according to the Education Secretary, there are prospects of opening more in many other towns in the country in the nearest future. In order to have qualified staff for these schools, a Teacher Training College was opened in Mbengwi in 2000. The College, which is bilingual, admits all, irrespective of denomination. The only admission requirement is the advanced level General Certificate of Education.

The Mission has a Technical College in Muyuka, which started in 1995. This school offers trade courses, which include Home Economics, Woodwork, Building and Construction, Electricity, Accounting and Secretary ship. Admission too is opened to all, irrespective of denomination (Nwancha 2001).

In 1998, a Secondary School was opened in Nkwen for both boys and girls, irrespective of denomination as well. Apart from the normal secondary school curriculum, the principal of the School revealed to me that it offers additional subjects in Medical Sciences, Computer and Industrial Chemistry.

In the area of health, it runs Health Centres in Garoua and Yaounde, which started in 1999 and 2000 respectively. According to the Secretary of the Medical Department, there are prospects of upgrading them to hospitals. However, before this time, there had been existing two other Health Centres that were indirectly linked to this Mission: one at Mbakeng (opened in 1975) and the other at Banteng (opened in 1980). The two health centers were not directly opened by the Mission but by some foreign Missionaries who were affiliated to the church. These were Reverend Daniel Roth for Mbakeng and Sister Dorothy Flick for Banteng. The Mission has however, taken over full control of all of them. The Mission's lack of interest in having full control over these Centers from the start was because of its original position in the running of social services. The opening of these institutions by some members of the church also indicates that some of its members, before the crisis, saw nothing wrong with the church running social services or engaging in business (Shu 2001).

In Bamenda, it has a Printing Press (Gospel Press), which went into operation in 1986, with the intention of printing exclusively gospel materials, which were distributed free or sold at moderate prices. But with the crisis, the Director of the press revealed to me that they now print work on commercial basis to people, irrespective of religion.

The Mission runs 5 Christian Literature Centers viz: Bamenda, Muyuka, Yaounde, Douala and Kumba. Each is stocked with Christian literature including audio and videocassettes, calendars, diaries, stickers, T-shirts, key holders and

almanacs for sale. Each has a music set that plays choral music at all time to attract the attention of by-passers. These centers started before the advent of the crisis and were meant for evangelism. Christian books and materials were sold cheap but now they compete with other Bookshops on prices. The Director of the Muyuka center revealed that their books are either internally printed or imported at subsidized rates from foreign partners (e.g. Kingsway in Britain) and they supply imported books to other Bookshops, for instance, the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) chain of bookshops (Presbook), to sell on agreed profits, which are shared.

The decision to shift from complete asceticism to accumulation is crucial in the life of a church because it has to do with a doctrinal position in matters of faith. For this reason, only the highest decision-making organ of the church can do this. I met the Missionary founder of the Church, Reverend Werner Knorr, in his Bamenda residence in 2001 to know about the position of the church with regards to this development and he presented a document to me, which indicates the official position of the Mission on Prosperity. The document entitled *Full Gospel Mission: What does the Bible say? Our position on prosperity* was prepared and signed by the missionary founder himself. The document clearly brought out biblical passages defending prosperity and it equally encouraged members to accumulate. He told me that it was prepared in 1988 because the church authorities saw the necessity of not sticking to asceticism but also to a gospel that could prosper the church and its members. As the missionary founder of the church and the first Mission Superintendent, who from the beginning had played a big role in making the church to adopt asceticism, such a document coming from him was an indication that the church authorities sanctioned the shift from asceticism to prosperity. The period the document was prepared explains why the mission business enterprises were created only after this period. A majority of these was created after 1990. One thing that must be pointed out from the message is that the church does not completely turn its back to asceticism. Though a majority holds the idea of accumulation, those who might not support it are, with other biblical backings, allowed to remain with asceticism. For this reason, it is not a surprise to find some members of Full Gospel Mission still clinching to asceticism. This number, which consists of some elderly members, is minimal and it is likely that in the nearest future when most of them must have died, asceticism with the church would be something of the past. This definitely explains why there has been no resistance to the development. Maxwell (1998) has revealed a similar transition with the Zimbabwean Assembly of God, Africa (ZAOGA). Unlike the case of Full Gospel Mission, that of ZAOGA was not so smooth because it faced resistance from

some members of the church, particularly the older generation led by the early pastors of the church.

## Factors which influenced the adoption of the gospel of prosperity

The embracing of the prosperity gospel by the church, after many years of complete asceticism, could be attributed to the influence of some prosperity preachers and the Cameroon economic crisis.

### *The influence of prosperity preachers*

One of the greatest factors here has been the influence of prosperity preachers through their literature on the gospel of prosperity, which has always been widely available since the 1980s in Cameroon. This literature, is either in the form of tracts distributed freely by members of Pentecostal groups free to people or books published and sold at moderate prices in bookshops run by churches, including the various Full Gospel Mission Literature Centers in Cameroon and also during rallies, crusades or conferences. Examples of such works are those of USA Avazini John, E.W Kenyon, A.A. Allen, Oral Roberts, T.L Osborn, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, British Trevor Newport and Paul Yonggi Cho of South Korea.

Another factor is the influence of some prosperity preachers who have been visiting Cameroon and working closely with Full Gospel Mission. One of these Preachers has been Reinhardt Bonnke, the best-known Western crusader that has made much impact on the prosperity doctrine in Africa. Bonnke, born in Germany in 1940, acquired his pastoral training in the United Kingdom. He served as a pastor in North Germany before moving to settle in Lesotho as a pastor for the Apostolic Faith. In 1975, he created his crusade ministry, with headquarters in Johannesburg, South Africa. His first crusades with revivals were concentrated in Southern Africa but when he became more ambitious of making it a worldwide affair, he founded the Christ for all Nations (CFAN) and moved the headquarters to Frankfurt in Germany. By 1991, he was conducting about 18 crusades a year, 12 of them in Africa, the area of his major concern. His crusades are usually properly organized and highly attended. Though he is a Pentecostal, he tries to make his crusades nondenominational by involving the local churches in the organization, which gives much publicity to them. For example, in his 20-25 February 1990 crusade in Bamenda, Cameroon, over 65 local churches participated and over 250,000 people attended.

Besides these public rallies, or in conjunction with them, Bonnke has developed two other means of spreading his influence. One is 'Fire Conferences', which are special teaching seminars for all, and the other is 'Pastors Workshops',

which take place during every crusade and are normally meant for pastors of the churches involved in the crusade. He takes these seriously because he understands pastors are very instrumental in spreading his theology. In a bid to spread his theology of prosperity and also to become materially prosperous, around the edges of every crusade ground are his numerous stalls for selling Christian literature, tapes, CFAN T-shirts, bags and hats. These wares are often touted (sometimes at bargain rates) from the platform; even Bonnke himself during sermons will sometimes advertise his own books and cassettes. In some of his sermons, Bonnke does not belabor the prosperity gospel but uses expressions such as ‘God will make you prosper’, in the name of Jesus, I break the cycle of poverty’, ‘we open our purses and pockets right now and give; we shall cause you (God) to open your blessings on us’, which reflect the teachings of the gospel.

Bonnke has visited Cameroon twice for his CFAN crusades; from 21-26 February, 1989, he was in Kumba (the national headquarters of many Pentecostal churches in Cameroon and headquarters of the South West Region of Full Gospel Mission Cameroon.) and from 20-25 February, 1990 he was in Bamenda (the headquarters of the North West Region of Full Gospel Mission, which at that time was the national headquarters of Full Gospel Mission Cameroon). These crusades took place in the Anglophone part of the country and all the Pentecostal churches, which had existed in the region at the time, took active part. Mainline churches such as the Roman Catholic, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) and The Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC) did not participate. Full Gospel Mission, being the biggest Pentecostal church in the country, played a key role in inviting him to Cameroon and in organizing the crusades.

Late Benson Idahosa of neighboring Nigeria is another figure that is believed to have helped shape the gospel of prosperity in Cameroon. Idahosa could be classified as the best-known Pentecostal leader Africa has ever produced. He was not only seen frequently on Pentecostal platforms in Africa but also in Europe and the United States of America. He was the founder of the multi-million Naira ‘Miracle Center’ in Benin City, Nigeria, where thousands of ‘believers’ go every week to ‘seek their own personal miracles’. The Idahosa Bible College in the city is run as part of the Center. This College has helped to train many of the Pentecostal pastors in Cameroon as well as other African countries.

Idahosa, before his death in 1999, visited Cameroon several times for evangelistic purposes. He accompanied Bonnke on the two occasions he visited Cameroon and during each crusade, he took active part and also presented a sermon. He held a three-day conference in Douala in May, 1993, which was attended by members of Full Gospel Mission. In the course of one of his sermons in Douala, Idahosa dwelled lengthily on the prosperity message. In the sermon,

he claimed that God had brought him so many clothes he did not know he could have, a car that even that of the then Nigeria President Babangida did not match ('when my car passes in Nigeria, people gape') and so much food, all as a reward of his faith. In one of the sessions in Douala, he invited the crowd to receive a special 'anointing', which he argued was going to cause God to change their lives as he did to him. He explained that before his anointing, he used to travel economy class, but afterwards always traveled first class; before the anointing, he and his wife had always had to go without food if they had guest but since then whenever a guest came, he could afford to kill a cow; after the anointing, he got a better car, with air-conditioning and chauffeur, and expected to have a Mercedes 500 and a Concorde before November of that year. Before this anointing, he had a three-bedroom house, and at the time of the conference he had had a seven-bedroom house, but was expecting to have twelve bedrooms by the end of the year. All these indicated no doubt that Idahosa's agenda was fundraising. He told the crowd that God had told him to start the first Christian University in Cameroon and as such he asked the crowd whether they would not be happy to see the first Christian University in Cameroon brought by a Nigerian. After this, he gave his audience the chance to 'sow' and for thirty minutes, he lined up those who wanted to do so; first 10 thousand, then 5 thousand, then 2.5 thousand, then 1 thousand CFA. He kept on insisting that 'God will bless every seed sown', and 'I wish I were you, so that I could sow and expect a miracle'. After this, he invited everyone to come forward to buy a book he had written and a magazine 'for only 1 thousand CFA'. Many present took part in the exercise but right up to this moment nobody has heard anything about the University again (Gifford 1997).

Another great figure that cannot be left out when discussing the spread of the prosperity doctrine in Cameroon is Reverend Dr. Billy Lubansa of the Democratic Republic of Congo nationality. Fondly known amongst the Pentecostals in Cameroon as 'Super Papa Billy' he is the President-founder of the Flaming Fire of God Ministries International, which started in 1986 and is based in Kabwe Zambia with Liaison offices in Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Buea Cameroon. Reverend Billy Lubansa is an international Pentecostal conference speaker and organizer and he gives as his 'spiritual mentors' Ray McCauley, Reinhardt Bonnke, Kenneth Copeland and Kenneth Hagen. He is also a diplomat who worked with the International Association of Pan African Institute for Development for many years before retiring to settle back in Zambia to full-time running of his Ministry. While working with the Institute in Zambia, he attended Bonnke's 1986 Fire Conference in Harare and there had an experience that led to his founding of his Flaming Fire Ministry. He was transferred to the Pan African Institute for

Development (West Africa) in Buea in 1990, from where he retired in 2001. While in Cameroon, Reverend Lubansa preferred working with other Pentecostal groups rather than establishing a branch of his own Ministry in Cameroon because he believed the well-established Apostolic and Full Gospel Missions churches would frustrate the plan. Compared with Zambia, he argued that the Pentecostals churches in Cameroon were dead. After he attended a Full Gospel church, he believed he got nothing and after attending an Apostolic Church, he was not also satisfied because he felt the sermon lasted for just ten minutes. Because of this, he revealed; ....*then I saw why God brought me to Cameroon... My mandate was to get the local churches out of the doldrums.* He then started involving himself with the activities of the various Pentecostal churches, preaching in churches and organizing crusades for all with 'signs and wonders'. Cameroonians were amazed with his performance and activities because they believed a black could not do these. Reverend Lubansa made no secret of the fact that he was trying to change the ecclesiastical face of Cameroon but did this with tact. For instance, he worked with other groups rather than establishing a branch of his own church in Cameroon.

With regards to his prosperity position, he complained that the people of Cameroon were never taught about giving thus:

At the offering, they give brown coins (5, 10, 25, CFA): 'God would not mind', the pastors used to tell them. I started breaking that teaching. I gave a seminar 'Being delivered from the power of poverty' (for which he used the books of Copeland). An Apostolic Church pastor told me that the missionaries had told them, 'You don't need education or big churches because you are going to heaven'. This was implanted in them. We have to uproot all those things. They used to preach 'Blessed are the poor'. They must change to 'Jesus came to bring abundant life, prosperity'. They taught that money was evil. We need to have it to spread the kingdom.

Lubansa used to accomplish this uprooting of the old teaching through his program on the Buea local radio station, invitations to speak at other Pentecostal gatherings or crusades. He also achieved this through his big 'Church Growth' or 'Fire Conferences' that were organized on regular basis at the jungle village of the nearby Botanic Garden in Limbe. These usually highly attended international conferences were meant to be nondenominational but were attended only by Pentecostal groups and with international Pentecostal speakers invited from all over the world.

He retired from the Pan African Institute for Development in 2003 and went back to Zambia to fully occupy himself in running his church. Though no more living in Cameroon, he comes in regularly from Zambia to organize his 'fire conferences' in Limbe.

Another person, who has had an imprint in the spread of the gospel of prosperity in Cameroon, is Nigerian Reverend Dr Tunde Joda. He is a medical

doctor and the founder of Christ Chapel International Churches, with headquarters in Lagos, Nigeria. His church, which is amongst the most popular Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, has branches in Cameroon. Popular not only because of its relatively relaxed attitude to dressing and strict morality expressed by a retreat from 'worldly' concerns, but also the youthful and articulate personality of the founder. Tunde Joda led emotional and charismatic services, which gave rise to several new churches in the 1980s onwards, with similar doctrinal position on prosperity, the centrality of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, healing miracles and monetary rewards in Nigeria. Tunde Joda, who works closely with Billy Lubansa in organizing the fire conferences in Cameroon, pays regular visits to Cameroon for revival purposes and the running of his Ministry. His fortnightly publication entitled *Prosperity now*, is widely distributed and read in Cameroon. A copy is sold at a token of 1 hundred CFA, making it very affordable to many people. Each edition tackles a topical issue on the prosperity gospel. For instance, while that of October, 2000: Volume 1, Number 2 was entitled *Money Cometh to me now*, and that of January, 2000: Volume 2, Number 1 was on *Poverty or Prosperity: The choice is yours*, that of 2000: Volume 2, Number 7 was on *Opening your Faith account*. His general argument in the three editions is that the more a 'believer' gives out money for the service of the Lord, (literally, banking in faith) the more the Lord in the form of material prosperity rewards him.

When talking of Pentecostalism in Cameroon, one great national figure that has spearheaded its spread in the last decades is Zacharias Fomum (a Yaounde University 1 professor and son of a late Presbyterian minister). He defected from the Presbyterian Church at a time he was an elder in the Yaounde Presbyterian Church congregation 1978 and joined Full Gospel Mission. Immediately he joined Full Gospel Mission, he actively engaged in evangelistic outreach, which attracted many people to the church and about 1985, he founded his own church, the Christian Missionary Fellowship International (CMFI) with headquarters in Yaounde. Though he has his own church, he is considered in Pentecostal circle in Cameroon as an authority in matters of spirituality. His ideas on spiritual matters are usually taken to be the truth and for this reason most Pentecostal practices in Cameroon are tailored towards them.

Fomum's Ministry owns and runs the Christian Publishing House in Yaounde, which has a branch in Lagos, Nigeria. He has published over eighty books and many tracts which are sold or distributed free world wide on Christian literature, with a good number of them on issues relating to the gospel of prosperity. One of such books in which Fomum has espoused the prosperity doctrine is, *The Christian and Money: Banking in Heaven Today*, which was first published in



1988 and a fourth and latest edition in 1999. In the preface of the books, he writes:

In this book, the possibilities of banking in heaven are shown to the believer. All believers are carrying out banking. Some bank in earthly banks, others bank in their stomachs, others in clothes, cars, and the like, while some bank in heaven. We send this book out with prayer that it should stir the hearts of those who belong to the Lord to acquire permanent riches by investing in the Lord and in his gospel here and now.

Fomum begins this work, which is on the necessity of ‘giving’ to the Lord and the Lord’s work, by advising ‘believers’ to always, as a necessity, consecrate themselves and all their property before ‘giving’ the Lord’s share of these property. He argues that when ‘giving’ to the Lord, the ‘believer’ should copy the example of Jesus Christ, who gave His all and became poor for our sake, by ‘giving’ in the same way and to the same extent. In this light, he reveals that the measure you ‘give’ will be the measure the Lord will give back to you as a reward of giving. That is, if you give to God the best, the topmost, you will always receive from him the topmost. He also recommends in the work that ‘believers’ should use all of their abilities to make as much money as they possibly can and after making it, should ‘give’ it for the work of the Lord and to the poor and by doing this, they will not be trapped by the Lord. It should be noted that ‘giving’ in the book is in reference to money, hence he writes:

it is time to put all the money you have into the business of the Gospel and let it be used while the doors are open. Do not store it up in a will. Let it be used now.

Apart from accomplishing his spread of the doctrine through literature, Fomum also does it through his sermons in church and various crusades, which he organizes on a regular basis or others, which he is invited as guest preacher.

#### *The Cameroon economic crisis*

It is also very likely that the economic crisis, which is affecting the country, contributed much to the change. Before the Mission could embrace the gospel of prosperity, the economy of Cameroon was in a boom. Cameroon was regarded by most international financial institutions as a ‘middle income developing country and one of the economic success stories in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Gross National Product had increased from CFA 300 billion francs in 1970 to 2,000 billion in 1982. Also, with an average growth rate of 6 percent between 1977 and 1982, Cameroon’s economy was ranked one of Africa’s most credit-worthy nations, with a triple-A rating. Cameroon was also described as ‘the paradigm for Africa development’ and ‘an agricultural success story’ partly because of the administration’s encouragement of agricultural development rather than relying more exclusively on oil production as some African countries such as Nigeria and Gabon had done following petroleum’s discovery and exploitation. Western,

particularly French financial support was important in the socio-economic progress Cameroon experienced during this period. The foundation of French economic involvement in Cameroon was established in a series of financial and economic agreements between France and Ahmadou Ahidjo's government<sup>3</sup> in 1959 and renegotiated with only minor changes in 1973. These agreements allowed France to become heavily involved in providing financial and technical aid to almost every phase of the Ahidjo's administration. For example, in 1960, the first year of Cameroon's independence, French aid to Ahidjo's administration totaled a Francs equivalent of 50 million US dollars, representing 80 percent of total revenue collected by the government (Jua 1991, Konings 1996, Takougang and Krieger 1998).

As a result of the economic boom, the church, like other churches was rich because members were able to make substantial contributions for running it. In addition, more sources of funding from Western Missionary bodies were available to various churches as compared to what operates at this moment. These enabled churches to carry out their activities successfully. In addition to these sources, mainline churches in Cameroon engaged in business ventures in order to raise additional money for their activities. They engaged in business ventures in the areas of education, health, printing, agriculture etc. Full Gospel Mission, like other Pentecostal churches, did not engage in business ventures, which could provide the church additional income for its activities. The reason was simply because of its ascetic doctrine, which did not provide for accumulation. However, there was pressure on the church coming from the state government and even some of its members for it to engage in the provision of social services similar to those provided by mainline churches. The leaders of the church for long had resisted this because they believed it was going to be an impediment to church growth. In line with this, members were not encouraged to go into business ventures because the church feared that they could fall into the temptations of materialism and that could have a negative impact on faith and the church as a whole. While Full Gospel Mission was resisting the provision of social services, the mainline churches had long been involved in the provision of such services, most especially in the areas of health and education. Though considered social services, these institutions were and are still big sources of income to the central bodies of the churches. Institutions managed by the church were and are still highly valued by the public compared with those managed by the state for what is qualified as better services with the result being a consistently high demand for the services. This enables churches to raise much profit from the institutions. In addition, it used to be state policy when the

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<sup>3</sup> Ahmadou Ahidjo was the first president of independent Cameroon in 1960. He handed over power to his constitutional successor, Prime Minister Paul Biya in 1982.

economy was in a boom to make grants-in-aid to religious bodies for the running of some of these services. For instance, schools and hospitals, since they were carrying out services that the state would have been obliged to undertake in their absence. This state policy went further to enable these churches to make additional income from the institutions.

It could be argued that the availability of various sources of funding to Full Gospel Mission, contributed to its adopting an ascetic doctrine from the onset as opposed to the gospel of prosperity. With the economic crisis, contributions from members and external financial support to the Mission dropped drastically, and for it to survive, an alternative has been to embrace the gospel of prosperity, which could provide some income for its activities. An examination of its income generating enterprises reveals that most of them started during this period of the economic crisis in Cameroon.

It is very obvious that members of the church were unable to receive in concrete terms the expected rewards of asceticism in an economic-ridden country like Cameroon and they were willing and ready to get along with the doctrine of prosperity, which could enable them to fight the crisis. This willingness contributed in making the transition very smooth. As evidence that members were willing to embrace this gospel, many had started defecting to new Pentecostal groups (many coming in from Nigeria), which were coming in with the gospel of prosperity as their economic message. For instance, when Fomum defected from the Mission to found his Christian Missionary Fellowship International, which embraces the gospel of prosperity, many members of Full Gospel Mission defected to it. It could therefore be argued that apart from adopting this message as a strategy of raising finances for the church, its authorities must have also taken into consideration the needs to stop further defection, to bring back to its fold those who had done so and to convert more people.

## Presenting the message

The message of prosperity is passed on to members through many ways amongst which are: sermons during regular Sunday worships, rallies, media, material objects and the lifestyle of the leaders. Whenever an assembly has a project, which demands much money to accomplish, the theme of most of the sermons during the period would dwell on the gospel of prosperity and also when an announcement concerning the project is being made, members are often reminded of the gospel in a bid to persuade them to raise money relentlessly for the project. One such example is the library/rest house project of the Molyko assembly, which on one of the Sundays, the leaders of the assembly decided to

raise fund for the project. I was a participant in the worship service of that Sunday. The pastor's sermon was devoted to the gospel of prosperity. In this message, he reminded members that they only get rich by trusting in God and paying their tithes and that no one should expect financial success, if he or she does not fulfil his/her Christian obligation of giving for the service of the Lord. In line with the message, he reminded members of the importance of the library/rest house project for the growth of the church and the Molyko assembly in particular and therefore appealed to them to fulfil their Christian obligation of 'giving' to make the project succeed. During the announcement slot of that worship service, the elder of the church started by reminding members of the theme of the sermon that day before bringing out the strategy that was to be used in raising money for the project. He appealed to members to make pledges of at least 5 thousand CFA each for the project. A good number of members responded to the appeal and made various pledges. However, some who had a low income and could not pledge up to that amount were given the opportunity to pledge something lower. He started by appealing to those of them who could afford 4.5 thousand CFA to raise up their hands and some did. He did it for other amounts below that in descending order and eventually almost every member of the church made a pledge to pay an amount of money for the project within a period of two months.

The radio has been a powerful medium in disseminating the message, and this church always uses local radio stations for this aim. Within the last decade, a number of Pentecostal radio stations and TV channels have emerged in some towns in Cameroon as a result of the state's liberalization of the audio and visual media sectors. The advantage with the radio or TV is that a wider audience can be targeted. One of such stations is the Revival Gospel Radio in Buea, which is run by Pastor Tembi Alfred (a Full Gospel Mission pastor). In an interview with Pastor Tembi, the pastor indicated that one of his intentions of founding this station, is to be able to take the gospel of God right to wherever people, who do not have the opportunity of going to church are. For instance, in homes, offices, motor parks, markets and even in cars.

In a sermon, on this station on 27 July, 2003 during the Sunday weekly half-hour program on Full Gospel Mission (Full Gospel Half Hour), the elder of the Bolifamba assembly of the Mission, Nkweta Benjamin, decided to preach on the gospel of prosperity and his message was entitled 'Principles of Seed Faith'. In the message, he likens the growth in faith of a believer to a seed, which if sowed will produce more yields. He argues that only when we begin to 'sow our seeds in faith' properly, can we expect rewards from God. He believes that the proper way of sowing in God is by selecting the best seeds to plant and when this is done, the harvest too will be good. That is to say, we have to give to the Lord the

best we have and in a greater quantity, the return that will be much more than what we gave him. He further reveals this:

God wants to come to your rescue. He delights in obedience. Your giving proves that God opens the windows of heaven to you and causes the devourer to be rebuked. He invites people to verify his trustworthiness by their giving. I want to say that God's prosperity plans include tithing. Many people are handicapped by their own poverty and too often their poverty is caused by their own disobedience to the word of God. There are many ways of disobeying this word; one is robbing God. Those who withhold their tithes and offerings to the Lord are actually robbing him and as a consequence, are robbing themselves of the blessings of riches that the Lord can bestow upon them. When you break the law, the benevolent law of God cannot work on you. I want to say that nothing will keep a wise believer from tithing and giving, but he or she will never be found to tithe or give offerings just to get something in return. Rather the act arises from obedience and God always rewards obedience.

Tracts on the gospel of prosperity, printed by the Gospel Press Bamenda, are highly used to spread the message. The tracts are given to members of the church to either distribute to the general public freely everywhere or sold at affordable prices. Each tract is devoted to a particular theme of interest on the prosperity gospel, for example, one, which was entitled 'Truths about Money' argues that money is very important to a Christian and God, unlike Satan, wants all his followers to be rich. It argues that the devil can be much more effective in neutralizing your testimony if you are financially weak and impotent and as such God wants to arm you with all his spiritual armour, and with the finances you need to effectively bring the message of salvation to a dying world. It believes that in a spiritual warfare, money is one of the necessary tools to provide desperately needed Bibles for the entire world and it is as well important in evangelisation.

Material things are also used to spread the gospel. These include: inscriptions on pens, T-shirts, stickers, which are stuck on bibles, front doors, walls, briefcases, and handbags and in cars. Some of the inscriptions read: 'Every believer should give for God's work in order to receive His blessings', 'It is time to put all the money you have into the business of the gospel and let it be used while the doors are open. Do not store it up in a will. Let it be used now', 'Open a bank account for God now', 'God blesses in abundance so that those blessed may be able to give for every good work. God never blesses anyone so that he may hoard the riches'. As a strategy to spread the message, these things are usually sold at affordable prices to the public or even distributed freely. These items are made available for sale to the general public during rallies or in shops.

The lifestyles of some of the church leaders also help to spread the gospel. For instance, some live a life of affluence by owning expensive property such as cars, watches, houses and dressing gorgeously. They equally indulge in business ventures along with the church, which they argue is in compliance with the

gospel of prosperity. The tendency here is that when ordinary members see their leaders engaged in these, they have all reasons to believe that they are the right things for a Christian to do and therefore they try to emulate.

Reverend Ewome Paul and Dr Oben Pius are some of the church leaders whose lifestyles could be argued are helping to disseminate the message. Each of them seems to be successful in life and accumulation when compared to the general living condition of Cameroonians. I interviewed each of them to know what they make of the message with regards to their life history. Their stories and the analyses they make of them show that they believe strongly in the prosperity gospel. They each attest that they invest in God's work as stipulated in the gospel of prosperity and it is the fruit of the investment that they are reaping in all forms in their life. Each presents his life experiences in a bid to show the truth of the gospel and argues that anybody who leads a similar life will experience similar success.

*Reverend Ewome Paul (District pastor Buea)*

Reverend Ewome, popularly known as 'Pa', not only among his Christians, because of his age, (about 67 years) simplicity, fatherly and caring attitude towards all, irrespective of faith, is the District Pastor for Buea. Moreover, he has a jovial character, which has made many people to know him. He owns a nice enclosed villa in Muea and he is chauffeured-driven in a Mercedes car. He could always be seen neatly dressed in suits and some other admired African traditional dresses. I had a lengthy interview with him in his residence in Muea on a Wednesday morning.

He was converted from the Presbyterian Church to Full Gospel Mission in 1960 in his village Maumu during a rally, which had Reverend Knorr as the preacher. Reverend Ewome, who did commercial education, worked with the Cooperative movement as secretary and the Ekona Research Institute as accounts clerk and later the store keeper between 1963-1967. In 1967, he took part in a 3 months Bible training course organized by the Mission in Muyuka. After doing this course, he resigned from research and decided to go into full-time Pastoral Ministry on a salary of 3 thousand CFA, which he told me was far below what he was receiving with the Research Institute. In 1980, he attended the Full Gospel Mission Bible Institute in Bamenda and graduated with a Diploma in Theology. He has served the church in various capacities ranging from Local Pastor, District Pastor, Area Pastor, and Assistant Mission Secretary to Assistant Mission Superintendent.

Reverend Ewome's story to me on how God has been blessing him with prosperity from when he became 'born-again' is fascinating:

While in his first pastoral station at Bakundu Foe, he received a Christian tract, which after reading it, he subscribed to it. Within three weeks, instead of receiving copies of it, he got a letter in which the writer was telling him that God had revealed to him that he should give Reverend Ewome the necessary transportation assistance to enable him efficiently and effectively carry out his work in Cameroon. The writer of the letter then asked Reverend Ewome the number of kilometers from his station to the main city (Kumba) and what could be provided to him as a means of transportation. Reverend Ewome said some friends advised him to go in for a car but he refused and instead preferred a motorcycle. In a few weeks, he received a letter, which included a cheque that had enough money to buy and obtain the necessary legal documents for a heavy brand new motorcycle. He bought a motorcycle, which after two years had depreciated but through regular reports on its performance to his donor, he was sent money for another one. The old one was given out to another pastor. After three months of using the second motorcycle, he gave it for servicing. While testing it after repair, the mechanic collided with a big stone and it got bad almost beyond repair. He then made his report to his donor and he was told to instruct the mechanic to write to the donor what happened. The mechanic did and the donor wrote back telling Reverend Ewome to forgive the mechanic arguing that it was a result of his (Ewome) faith that the mechanic did not die in the accident. The donor gave him money for another motorcycle and advised him to repair the old one, sell it and use the money for himself though he repaired it but gave it free of charge to the Mission.

When the second motorcycle got bad, the Mission gave him another one that had been offered by an American Missionary. After using this one for a short time, a German Missionary who visited the Mission and saw his involvement in the work of God went back to his country and sent him a Honda motorcycle. He again repaired the old one and gave it to another Pastor.

Then in 1997, he visited Germany and two German friends bought him a Mazda car, which he used in Cameroon for sometime. Shortly after his return to Cameroon, a group of German youths, he ministered to them while in their country, contributed money, bought a Mercedes Benz 200 car and sent to him, which he uses now. Another German friend (Schneider) he met in Germany sent him 3 million CFA that was an offer from two other German friends for him to buy a stronger car. He however added some money to it and bought a four-wheel drive Toyota land cruiser, which he used while in Yaounde. When he was transferred to Buea, he left the land cruiser in Yaounde with his successor because, to him, it was offered for evangelization. Moreover he had other cars.

Reverend Ewome sees himself as a very successful person. Truly this is the case. He lives in his own house in Muea. It is a well-constructed and modern

compound, with very good modern furniture and garden. He has seven children who are performing very well in education with one pursuing further studies in Belgium. In Cameroon, only a few can afford to send their children or other relations to the West for further studies because of the financial cost involved but Reverend Ewome has been able to do this for his son. He has his driver, whom he has employed and pays from his pocket.

Reverend Ewome attributes his success in life to his complete compliance to the gospel of prosperity. He aptly puts it:

Though I left my highly paid job with research and accepted to do God's work with a meager reward of 3 thousand CFA, the Lord has multiplied it in a wonderful way that I cannot understand. I am a man with many children, a large house built by myself, an expensive car given to me by God's people and a faithful wife. I have been serving the Lord and doing all what he requires from me since 1961, just to name a few. I do not merit all these, it is just God's grace. If I use these things foolishly, or puff up as a great man, it becomes a sin and God will punish me.

Talking of serving the Lord for a long time and doing all what is required of him as a 'believer', Reverend Ewome definitely included his giving his tithes to the Lord in compliance with the gospel of prosperity and the reward being prosperity in all forms.

Though he strongly holds a spiritual reason, I believe his material success could be attributed to a combination of factors, which include:

Firstly Reverend Ewome is a hardworking man. Apart from his pastoral work, he likes and practises agriculture. In his enclosed yard, is a big farm with vegetable and assorted crops such as plantains, yams and cocoyams. He has other farms, which are located far from his home. He, including other members of his family, could be regularly seen working in these farms. The surplus yield from the farms is sold in some of the nearby markets. Farming pays a lot in this part of Cameroon because of the high demand for food by its increasing population and the buying of this food by *buyam selams* to sell in the big neighboring town of Douala and even neighboring Gabon and Nigeria. Though Reverend Ewome downplayed it, his success in accumulating must not undermine this aspect because when one observes the economic strength of many other farmers in the area, it indicates that farming pays.

Secondly, as a Pentecostal church pastor, his way of life has been oriented towards abstaining from certain practices, which Pentecostals take as vices. This includes: drinking, smoking, running after women, and attending and taking part in secular activities. These practices no doubt, contribute much in draining one's income and abstaining from these could be a contributory factor to his success in accumulating.

Thirdly, with Full Gospel Mission, the material success of a pastor is partially accounted for by the financial strength of his assembly. Each assembly provides



financial assistance to its pastor and as such, the more an assembly raises money, the more its pastor accumulates. The Molyko assembly, which is directly pastored by Reverend Ewome is the biggest and richest in the Buea District. The financial support he receives from the assembly is another good source of income to him. Other pastors who do not manage rich assemblies would definitely be lacking in accumulation, if they do not have good sources of income.

*Oben Pius (Elder, Molyko assembly)*

Oben, popularly called Elder Oben by members of the Molyko assembly because of the position he holds in the assembly, willingly accepted to allocate some of his valuable time for me to interview him in his Sand Pit neighborhood residence. He is a very soft-spoken, but firm gentleman of about 44 years old. It was difficult to contact him for this interview because of his tight schedule, which revolves around his church activities, business and University activities. He comes from Manyu Division, where he did his early primary and secondary education in Presbyterian institutions. He holds a Ph.D. in Environmental Science and he is full-time lecturer in the University of Buea. His wife, with whom he has two kids, holds a Ph.D. as well and teaches in the same Department of the University. Like Reverend Ewome, he owns and drives in one of the best Mercedes cars on the University campus. He could equally be seen gorgeously dressed at every time. In order to live this lifestyle, he engages himself in some business ventures through which income could be derived to augment his salary received from the civil service. His profile presents an interested case of someone who attributes his prosperity (business, academic, family) in live both to hard work and strong faith in the Lord Jesus.

Oben was brought up in a Presbyterian family and this explains his early upbringing in Presbyterian educational institutions. He used to be so active in church activities and at times headed movements within the Presbyterian Church such as the Young Presbyterians and Christian Youth Fellowship in his congregation.

When he passed his General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced level examination in 1981, he enrolled in the University of Yaounde in the Faculty of Science. While in Yaounde, Oben ‘gave his life to Christ’ as he puts it:

Deep in my mind, I realized while in Yaounde that the life I was living was dangerous for my salvation. It was not a life worth to continue because it was full of uncertainty. Though I was so active in the Presbyterian Church, the sort of things I was doing were not pleasing because of the lack of the Holy Spirit in me. I, just like others in the church, used to have girl friends, drink alcohol, discuss immoral things with my friends but my church leaders, though they preached against some of them, never saw the relevance of the practicality of the preaching. That made me suspicious of my leaders, whom I had considered as prophets. I then stopped going to church but some other people in Yaounde came and talked the gospel with me and I was moved. There was definitely something divine and supernatural in what

they preached to me because my eyes became opened. I then asked them when this gospel started because I had never heard it. They told me it started a long time ago and from then I 'gave my life to Christ'.

The reaction of his relations to this was so negative for about three years to a point that his mother almost left the village for Yaounde to attack those who had persuaded him to join Full Gospel Mission. The parents were particularly so furious because Oben was not progressing in studies at the Yaounde University, which they attributed to much time spent on religious activities, rather than studies. However, failing in the Yaounde University at the time was a general trend among anglophone students because of the bilingual nature of its program, which tilted more towards the advantage of francophones. Most anglophones used to be there on temporary basis while looking for admissions in some of the professional schools in the country or foreign Universities; most often in Britain, Nigeria and the United States of America. He revealed the following as the reactions of his parents when he took the decision to be 'born-again':

They were not pleased but later on, when they saw my life and realized it was not that of evil but a life of sincerity, they started questioning me and from my response, my father 'gave himself to the Lord Jesus' and died as a 'believer' in Christ. My mother, who was more unscrupulous, was very radical about it and was still angry but finally she 'gave her life to Christ Jesus' and was baptized by immersion. She is now a 'believer' in Full Gospel Mission. The same thing that happened to me, which was supernatural and divine, happened to them because, after much bitterness, they suddenly and independently accepted the Lord, without being forced to do so.

From the onset, his friends did not take him seriously. They thought it was a decision that was to be short-lived but that did not affect their friendship. Unfortunately for them, Oben was growing stronger and stronger in his faith. They realized he was no more interested in running after women, drinking alcohol, telling lies, fraud and immoral discussion but instead reproached them when any of these occurred. Most of the friends withdrew from his company because they could no longer get along with him.

For the reason that studies did not move well in Yaounde, Oben decided to withdraw from the University but with the intention of continuing elsewhere. He prayed to God to do something so that he could get admission in a good University and to become a good student. He applied for admission in the University of Ibadan, Nigeria in 1985 to read Zoology and got it. He finished his first degree in recorded time and with good results. He then enrolled for a Masters in Environmental Science, which he did in recorded time as well and advanced to the Ph.D. program. In this program, he was putting in between 10 to 15 hours everyday and the rest of the time for his religious activities. He finished his work in one and a half year, an unprecedented record in the Department. His supervisor was amazed with the performance but decided to delay the defence for another one and a half year. He then went through the program in three years.

When he returned to Cameroon, he was immediately recruited to teach in the University of Buea. Oben told me that his immediate recruitment in the University of Buea and that of the wife was not a surprise because, while still doing his Ph.D., 'God revealed' to him that a University was to be created in Buea and he and his wife were to be recruited as staff. They both graduated from the same Department in the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

As a professional scholar, Oben is a consultant in the area of Fishery. He had been invited several times by officials of the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Industries as well as Non-governmental Organizations that deal with fisheries to give talks to farmers on fishery and also as a resource person in seminars. Fish farmers invite him to design fishponds for them, on commercial basis. Also, he and his wife run a private hatchery behind their house under a common initiative group. They got a direct grant from the International Centre for Aquatic Research Management (ICARM) based in London, which has a Centre attached to the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Cameroon, to run this project. The project, the first of its kind in Cameroon, is moving very well and Oben told me that in the nearest future, he hopes to be the main supplier of fingerlings (young fish) to fish farmers in Cameroon.

Oben is very strong in his faith and he told me he fulfills all his religious obligations. He attributes his success in every aspect of life, first to his strong faith in the Lord. Like Reverend Ewome, he told me his faith in the God enables him to fulfill all his financial obligations to the Lord. He however does not rule out the part hard work has played in his success in life. He argues that God encourages his followers to be hard-working while serving him. God does not like a lazy person.

On faith, he pays his tithe (a tenth of his income) to the church every year bearing in mind that in compliance with the gospel of prosperity, God is going to multiply it in form of material and spiritual success. He makes his offerings when the need arises. He prays to God and reads his bible several times a day, and avoids places that can impact negatively on his faith. In all what he is doing, he has one goal: 'to prosper in the Kingdom of God'. This is the most serious thing, which as he puts it, he thinks of in his life:

Whatever I am doing I place my Lord first. Whatever I am doing, be it my job at the University or requesting for assistance from anywhere and I am told to stop calling the name of the Lord and preaching as a pre-condition for satisfying me, I will call off the thing at that moment.

On hard work, he reveals how he can lock up himself in a place for two weeks working untiringly. When he was doing his Ph.D., most of his time was spent in the laboratory. He never went for Christmas or New Year celebrations but preferred to use these periods for his work. Back in Buea, he teaches for many

hours (sometimes more than 200 extra hours in a session) and carries out many practical classes with his students. Coupled with these, are his church activities, hatchery and his documentation business centre, which pre-occupies him. He aptly puts it:

On Some days, I sleep for just three hours, for instance, most often after my church meetings in the evenings; we the leaders stay behind till about 12 midnight or 1 a.m. When I get home, I sleep for just about 3 hours and by 4 a.m., I am up to prepare for the next day. I do not eat after 4 p.m. because food takes a lot of energy and makes one to sleep. Since I work a lot at night, I would not want to take anything that would make me sleep. I learned this from another man of God, Zachary Fomum, who sleeps for just three hours a day and is one of the greatest scientists in Cameroon and the first Professor of organic chemistry in Africa. He prays for 6 hours a day and reads the bible 12 times a year.

As a lecturer in the University for about 4 years, he is expected to present at least six publications in two years time to move up to the rank of Associate Professor. He has already twelve publications, waiting for the time to come so that he puts in his application for promotion. He is quite optimistic that within the shortest possible time, he would rise to level of Professor because of hard work and the intervention of God. He cites Daniel, Meshack, Abednego and Moses in the Bible as examples of people whom God did it to them.

He attributes his ability to finish his Ph.D. program within a short time, to a combination of the above factors. He argues that this kind of strength in working, without being sick or broken down, is God's love for him. He revealed to me that sometimes when he is asleep, he gets something knocking behind him but when he wakes up, he sees nothing but gets in a mode of working. He believes the angels of God who want him to work do the knocking.

He believes that his success and that of his wife in getting employed in the University of Buea very fast, when compared to others, is nothing other than their strong faith in the Lord. He also believes that the success of the hatchery and the grant he received are nothing other than the intervention of the Lord. As he puts it:

the Lord conceived the plan and used the International Organization to provide funding.

As evidence that his success has to do with his faith, Oben revealed that success and prosperity never came his way when he was not a 'believer' but since he 'gave his life to Christ' and started giving to the Lord what belongs to Him, things have changed.

The above two cases (Reverend. Ewome and Elder Oben) reveal the experience of prosperity in all forms, material, spiritual and the family. An importance issue that can be underscored in the two cases is that in certain situations each of them argues that God used an intermediary to give him financial or material assistance. While Reverend Ewome holds that God used the author of a tract to supply him with motorcycles and Germans to supply him with

vehicles and cash, Elder Oben believes that God used an International Organization to give him financial assistance to run a project. This brings us to the conclusion that the Mission believes God does not necessarily come directly to assist the 'believer', rather he can use another person or other methods, which are subject to questioning in the eye of an 'unbeliever'. For instance, an 'unbeliever' or a critic of the doctrine will question how financial assistance from an organization, which is normal, should be considered a reward from God as a result of faith. Each funding organization sets out its own criteria for giving financial assistance and if these are met, the chances of obtaining would be high but if not, it would be low. In this case, it is likely that Elder Oben met the criteria set out by OCARM and therefore qualified for assistance and not necessarily the intervention of God.

Another important issue, which can be underscored in the two cases is that each claims a continuous upward mobility in prosperity and downplays failures in life. In a country like Cameroon, which has been affected by an economic crisis, almost everybody is experiencing economic hardship and to claim an upward economic mobility all the time may not be realistic. The continuous rise in the prices of basic commodities coupled with low salaries, both in the public and private sectors have made it difficult to always have a continuous upward financial prosperity. Continuous upward mobility in financial prosperity could be achieved in Cameroon, notwithstanding, but this could only be possible with people who use illegal methods such as embezzlement, bribery, money laundry etc to accumulate. As 'believers' it is unlikely that they get involved in any of these vices, which they strongly condemn thereby refuting their claims of continuous upward financial mobility.

## The reactions of the followers

Just like the church, members can actually be seen now translating the Gospel of prosperity into practice. They emulate what their leaders do in terms of the gospel. For instance, in dressing, it is commonplace to see the translators, the secretary, lessons readers, ushers and elders in every assembly gorgeously dressed during worship service because they know that they have to frequent the stage and for that reason their way of dressing should be an example for other Christians to emulate.

Since the gospel of prosperity does not emphasize a dressing code, members can be seen appearing gorgeously dressed, not only for ceremonies but also in daily appearance, with women putting on elaborate hairstyles and make-up and the men modern suits. It is not a surprise to see some of the women running beauty centers. For example, the Secretary of Full Gospel Church Molyko runs

the 'Front liners Beauty Center' in Molyko Buea, which started in 2001. This is a business center that takes care of women's bodies, heads and nails. In an interview with the proprietor, something which interest me was why she decided to go into beauty business when the popular belief is that Pentecostals consider any act of trying to make one beautiful as ungodly, her response was:

I know that these 'unbelievers' are making a mistake. God is a beautiful God. There is nothing in God that is in disorder. I believe that being with God, we need to keep our bodies clean. This does not imply 'masking' ourselves by trying to change our form or structure but just to take care of us. We have to take care of parts of our bodies such as legs, hands, hair and face. Most people do not have enough time to sit down and clean their toes, nails etc, which are the little things necessary for beauty.

By adopting body beauty practices, the ease with which Full Gospel women could be differentiated from sight in the past from other women (particularly those of the mainline churches, which do not place any restriction on this), is fading out.

It is common place to see members drive past with nice and expensive cars or see them parked at the church ground during church worships or any other occasion, which brings members together. As mentioned, the leaders themselves promote and foster this image, by possessing expensive and nice foreign goods and also appearing gorgeously dressed when leading the congregation, which is often interpreted as a sign of God's blessing.

For the rich members of the church, they too believe that the best they can do is to give to the church. This creates some kind of reciprocal relationship between the leader and his followers, through which the followers receive spiritual nourishment from the pastor and the followers through giving to the church and the pastor in turn reward the pastor. This reciprocal relation between patron and client continues, but is policed by the elements of doctrine that enforce ethical behavior. The relationships are further transformed in the sense that it is not the person helped who should be looked to for a service, but God who will bring the reward. Individuals who break the ethical codes either by taking advantage of the largesse without displaying a willingness to give or by using offers in a manipulative or extortionist way or denying them, are subject to the ill will of God. Unscrupulous or greedy pastors must however always bear in mind the fact that their legitimacy rests on keeping their accumulation in balance with the fortunes of their members and in ensuring that things continue to 'roll in circles'.

The attitude to material success has also enabled members to create new networks of accumulation. For instance, pastors have succeeded in using their positions to make international contacts, which have enabled them acquired wealth directly or make visits out of the country that provide them with money. This could be attending international religious conferences or bible training programs. For instance, the Haggai Bible Institute in Hawaii in the USA, which

offers short programs for pastors of Pentecostal churches, has often been used for these aims by some of the pastors of Full Gospel Mission. The more these pastors travel abroad, accumulate and wear fine things, so the congregation sees that as evidence that God rewards accordingly.

Members also display wealth, engaged in competitive business ventures in compliance with the gospel with ‘unbelievers’, both at national and international levels. Some of the businesses are carried out on sole proprietor basis while others are on partnership. They do this with the blessing of the church, which encourages them to be hard-working and to accumulate wealth, not only for themselves but also to help prosper the church. Some of them actually do the businesses with lots of financial successes. This could be attested with their standards of living, which are relatively better than that of the ordinary Cameroonian. Christopher (member of the Molyko assembly) is one of these successful business people.

### *Christopher*

Christopher, who is popularly called Prince, is about 48 years old. He is a builder and professional photographer in Buea. He was born in Menchum Division of the Northwest province but migrated to the Southwest province for greener pasture when his father died in 1976 and there was no one to sponsor him in secondary school. When he came to the Southwest, he worked with the tea estate in Tole, where he accumulated some money and enrolled in an artisan center in Tiko where he did building construction.

He worked briefly with some building construction companies in Buea, for instance, the one that constructed the University of Buea in 1984 (then called University Center). While working with the company, he bought a Camera and did photography as a hobby before ending up as a professional when he realized that it pays. Before going professional, he did some training with a professional photographer in Tiko on how to focus professional cameras, develop and print black and white pictures.

He has a photo studio in Molyko in which there are a number of apprentices and an annex in the same neighborhood, which is controlled by a young man he trained. Though a professional photographer, he still does building. Whenever he has a building contract, the most experienced apprentice controls the studio but he comes whenever he has time to supervise.

Christopher reveals that he is making it in photography despite the many photographers and amateurs in towns. He revealed thus:

I believe that God is able to make a way for his child because the bible says that God makes a way for his children. If God makes a way for his children, then he is the one that orders the steps of a righteous man. If I am living a righteous life, God will gather those things that belong to me and bring to me. That is why I can say I am succeeding in business because

God is the one that orders my steps. He brings my own customers and the job that I do also attracts customers to my business place. This is because I snap good pictures that people admire them and always love to come back to my place.

Though Christopher could not reveal his annual income, there are indications that he is making it. His house in his neighborhood is among the best and his children go to the expensive primary school. From the above quotation, he no doubt attributes the success to the intervention of God. He knows very well that paying his tithes as stipulated by the gospel of prosperity is one of the keys to success in business. As a 'child of God', just like Oben, he revealed that he does not cheat God in money (that is, pays all his tithes and regularly too) that is supposed to be given to him.

Women of the church too are not left out in businesses. Some of them get involved in small enterprises and they can actually be seen succeeding. Some go from office to office selling snacks, house decoration items prepared by themselves, cosmetics, jewelry etc. Some of them in the civil service, who do not have the opportunity to move from one office to another, keep business items in their offices where customers come for them. Others in the civil service occupy themselves with other commercial activities after official working hours. Below is the case of Frida, which exemplifies, a civil servant who is succeeding in combining her public service duty with a number of businesses, some of which are mentioned above. Just like Christopher, she seems to be succeeding in material accumulation.

### *Frida*

Frida is a secretary in the University of Buea and the head of the decoration committee of the Molyko assembly of Full Gospel Mission. She was born in Buea about 40 years ago where she did her primary education before proceeding to Bamenda to do technical education. After that, she did a course in clerical education in Buea, which earned her a Diploma in secretaryship. In 1995 she proceeded to Yaounde and did another course for one year in Medical laboratory because she believed it was easier picking up a job in the medical field though it was not the case. With the diploma in Secretaryship, she was employed in 1999 as a secretary in the University of Buea.

In addition to what she receives as a salary from the University, she is also engaged in some business activities. She has a computer at home, which she uses in doing work such as typing students' projects, articles, invitations cards and notices to people on commercial basis. She does these when she must have closed from the university and on weekends. She admitted that she makes much money (up to about 350 thousand CFA a year) from the computer, especially when final year university students have to type their dissertations and term papers. She also fries chips and groundnuts to sell. She does some of these in the



evenings or wakes up very early in the morning if she could not make it in the evening. In order to ease or increase sales, she leaves some of the items with her friends who work in some business centers in town for their customers to buy. In return, the friends receive an agreed percentage of money on the quantity they sell. She keeps the rest in her office in the University for staff and students to buy. Frida makes a reasonable amount of profits (she could not estimate the amount but believes it was reasonable) from the sales of these things. She revealed that she makes sure she pays one tenth of her monthly income to the church as expected of every 'believer'. She believes this is the secret of her success in whatever she embarks on.

The above cases present situations where members have been successful in material accumulation. Since the mid-eighties, Cameroon has been going through a serious economic crisis that has retarded businesses tremendously. Moreover, with its new tax code, many new taxes have been introduced on businesses and this has adversely affected many of them.<sup>4</sup> The general cry of business people is that business is not moving and that of the consumers is that life has become difficult because the prices of basic commodities keep on increasing. From this message, I expected every 'believer' to be prosperous like the above cases because they 'know the technicalities' of doing so despite the economic crisis but unfortunately my findings reveal that many, like most other Cameroonians still remain poor. The argument raised by most of those who did not achieve the expected prosperity was that the 'devil' was the one blocking their way. They explained that the 'devil' is always at work to make God's children to suffer so that they turn away from God and follow him. Despite the poverty, they however remained optimistic that they will eventually achieve the prosperity because God can always rescue his children from the hands of the 'devil'. By implication, they hold that there is a kind of war between God and the 'devil' over 'believers'. While God wants them to be prosperous, the 'devil' prefers that they suffer and God is always victorious. This expectation of a better future masterminded by God becomes now like a mechanism of adjusting to failures or poverty in life. Ogadima and Mary are examples of members who have not achieved this prosperity despite all efforts put in, but they still remain hopeful. I made a detailed case of each of them.

### *Ogadima*

Ogadima, of Nigerian origin, was born in Cameroon in 1967. He is a tall and dark complexion gentleman. He did his primary and secondary education in Buea and Limbe respectively. On completing secondary school and in the business spirit of an Ibo man, he preferred to do business rather than furthering his

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<sup>4</sup> See Cameroon Law No 2002/003 of April 2002 to institute the general tax code.

education. He went to Owerri in Nigeria where he stayed for three years with his uncle (a business man) trying to learn how to do business. His uncle was in drug business and while in Nigeria, Ogadima was helping him in selling the drugs (sometime hawking or in the store). On acquiring this experience, he decided to come back to Cameroon (he revealed to me that though a Nigerian, he prefers living in Cameroon where he was born and has many friends). When he returned to Cameroon, he got involved in trade between Nigeria and Cameroon. He was buying drugs and shoes from Nigeria and selling them in Cameroon. He traveled between the two countries by engine propelled transport canoes, which commute passengers and goods regularly between Tiko, Limbe or Idenau and Calabar in Nigeria. The capital he used in beginning the business was provided partly by his uncle he had served in Nigeria and his parents who still live in Cameroon. He revealed to me that he started with a meagre amount of about two hundred thousand francs. He started by supplying the drugs to various medicine stores in Fako division and later he opened his own medicine store in Buea Town where drugs that were not supplied were sold. With shoes, his younger brother was the one selling them in another shop in Buea and in some markets in Fako division. The business was flourishing and by 1998 he told me he could boast of about 5 million CFA. Ogadima revealed that the secret of this success was that he did not forget God when he was in the business. He made sure he gave a tenth of his income to God in form of tithes.

In 1999, Ogadima had the worst experience in his life. He revealed that he went to Nigeria, bought goods for about 3 million CFA and put in a cargo canoe, which capsized on the high sea and his goods could not be recovered. He revealed that some passengers who had boarded the capsized canoe died. He however thanked God for sparing his life by making him to board a passenger canoe during that trip. After this incident, Ogadima did not want to continue trading between Nigeria and Cameroon any longer because he did not want to risk using the little capital he had to continue in the same line of business.

Ogadima then embarked on sand business in Buea, which he does at the moment. He supplies sand to people and church bodies that have building projects to carry on. The sand, which is extracted from the Mungo River, is supplied in tippers. The business has not been very smooth because he does not have a tipper of his own. The Cost of hiring a tipper is high. Moreover most construction is done in the dry season, which renders him idle in the rainy season. Another problem he faces with the business is that there are many people involved in it in Buea thereby making it competitive. He revealed that the business has not been moving well and many people owe him. His prayer is that God should touch the hearts of these debtors so that they can pay his money. He also revealed that his brother dubbed him of about 1.5 million CFA and

disappeared to Gabon in 2001. He did not however revealed details on how he was dubbed but he seemed to have let it go because it concerned a relation. This compounded his financial difficulties.

Ogadima from all indications has a lot of financial difficulties at the moment. He gives a possible reason for his financial difficulties. He argues that it is possible that it is the work of the devil that is trying to push him away from God. He believes if this is correct, God who is more powerful than the devil would soon take control of him. In this state of hardship, he continues to pay his tithe regularly and has the hope that God will prosper him again. He argues that when a Christian finds himself in this state, it is good for him to strengthen his faith in God, by going closer to Him and doing what is expected of a 'believer'. A 'believer' should always be hopeful in life. If he loses hope and withdraws from God, he should expect the worst either in this world or the world beyond.

### *Mary*

Mary is a slim, chocolate complexioned lady of about 1.6 meter tall. She was born in 1977 in Buea. Her parents, who are retired from the CDC, come from the North West province. She did her primary and secondary education in Molyko Buea. She passed her General Certificate of education (GCE) advanced level in 1996 and immediately proceeded to the University of Yaounde 1 where she graduated after four years with a Bachelor of Arts in History. She got married to Isaiah (a secondary school teacher) in 2001 and they had two children but one died early that year.

Since Mary left secondary school, she has been struggling to get a job to no avail. She revealed that she has been applying unsuccessfully to work in many places. Some of the places she revealed to me were: the Cameroon Telecommunication Corporation (CAMTEL) and some mission and private colleges in Buea. CAMTEL rejected her application because employment has been suspended in the corporation because it is among the state corporations that have been advertised for privatisation. The Baptist, Roman Catholic and Presbyterian colleges, which she applied for a teaching position, rejected her because she is a Christian of a different denomination. For private colleges, most of them did not need the services of a history teacher. She even wrote and passed the written entrance examination into the Higher Teachers' Training College Yaounde in 2003 (employment into the civil service is guaranteed on graduating from this school) but failed the oral examination because she did not bribe those in charge of the examination. Bribing to pass a competitive examination into a professional school, which employment is guaranteed on graduation is normal in Cameroon. She revealed that though the money to bribe was not even available, she could not do such a thing if she had it because she is 'Born-again' and would

never do such an evil act. In 2004, she made another attempt to enter the school but failed the written part. Since then, she gave up writing the examination.

Mary has been trying to do small business such as buying and selling of dresses and jewellery for women but has had lots of difficulties such as not making profits and the inability of her debtors to pay her. Mary's parents are very poor and her younger ones look on her for financial assistance because they believe her husband, being a civil servant, has money. Her elder brother (a father of four children) is a highway bus driver but he is extremely very careless with money. Her parents cannot look on him for financial assistance because he spends most of his money on gambling and drinking. Unfortunately, her husband's pay package is very small to take care of his household, extended relations and those of Mary. This has made her to have a lot of financial difficulties.

Like Ogadima, Mary pays her tithes from the little money she can raise and she is very hopeful that God, who loves her, would redress the situation. She holds tight to her 'born-again' values and being almost jobless, she devotes most of her time on church activities. I asked her why she has been having these failures in life despite the love of God; her response, which was similar to that of Ogadima, was:

The bible says that Satan is the accuser of the brethren. Even though we are serving God, Satan is always there to make us unhappy. At times those failures come and it is only for you to be careful, watchful and prayerful. The bible says: watch out and pray, let us not fall into temptation and that the spirit is willing, the flesh is not. At times you can be weak but when you pray to the Lord, God answers. Also Satan is not sleeping; he is fighting that we should go away from the Lord. At times when Satan fights I have to pray to God to give me grace.

There were however, other people who, in addition to the above, gave other reasons to explain why some 'believers' remain poor, one of which is interestingly attributed to God and the other is that looking at the history of Christianity, God does not always reward a 'believer' with material prosperity. Duru and Johnson represent such cases.

*Duru*

Duru, a short and dark skin soft-spoken man, was born of Nigerian parents in 1969 in Buea. He was born a Roman Catholic but he later converted to Full Gospel Mission despite the disapproval of his relations. His highest qualification is the First School leaving Certificate, which he obtained in Buea. Like Ogadima, he went to live in Nigeria after completing school for business motive. While there, he was converted to the 'Born-again' faith in Nigeria after attending a crusade organised by the Assembly of God Church in 1986. He joined Full Gospel Mission when he returned to Cameroon and could not find the Assembly of God Church in Buea. He revealed that he decided to join Full Gospel Mission because its doctrines and practices are similar to those of the Assembly of God Church.

While in Nigeria, he did business in electronic and electrical materials. He had a store in which he stocked these things. Along the line, thieves broke into the store and stole the goods. Life became difficult for him in Nigeria and he decided to return to Cameroon to meet his parents, where he believed it was better. While in Cameroon, he expected assistance from his parents but they refused to give him because he joined the 'Born-again' movement against their wish. Unable to coup in Cameroon, he decided to go back to Nigeria where he was recruited in a construction company as a store manager. He told me he resigned from the company in 1997 because as store manager, he was exposed to a lot of temptations from other workers. For instance, he was hated by some of his superiors who had on several occasions wanted him to connive with them to rob the company. Moreover, he seems not to have been satisfied with his salary.

After this, he decided to return to Cameroon again and his parents at this time opted to give him financial assistance for business but he turned down the offer because he considered it as a strategy to tell him to quit Full Gospel Mission. Without enough money to do a reasonable business, he decided to do farming of pepper and Okro in a cheap piece of land he hired. He realised some profit from the farming and decided to open a shoe and clothes shop in Buea Town. When he realised that the business was profitable, he stopped farming and concentrated on going to Nigeria to buy the goods. In 1999, he returned from a business trip with goods, which were stolen from the store the evening of the day he displayed them. He has not actually had any reasonable thing doing after that. He lives in a one-room plank house and barely manages to pay his rents. Though all these misfortunes happened and have rendered him very poor, Duru told me that he does not feel frustrated because of his faith in God. He remains very strong in his faith and he has not given up all hopes to prosper again. He spends most of his time on his church activities. He believes that if the devil has not been the one working to put him down, his good God could have been the one doing it to test

his faith. If the former is correct, he believes the almighty God will override the devil but if it is the later, then his good God has a plan for him.

### *Johnson*

Johnson, a primary school teacher, was born in Bali of the northwest province in 1968. He did his primary education in his native Bali village and came to the Southwest province where he did his secondary and high school education in Limbe and Buea respectively. He proceeded to the Yaounde University after obtaining his GCE advanced level but was unable to go through the program because of financial difficulties. He then went back to his village in 1988 and was recruited as a contract teacher in the government primary school. In 1992, he wrote and passed the entrance examination into Teacher Training College Kumba where he obtained his grade one certificate. His first station as a trained teacher was Kouseri, North Cameroon. He worked in Kouseri for three years and was transferred to Tiko in the Southwest province. He taught in Tiko for three years and was transferred again to the Government Practising School Molyko. He is married to a hairdresser and they have three children.

As any other primary school teacher in Cameroon, Johnson's salary is not very encouraging. It cannot really take care of the entire family. His old mother, who lives with him, is a patient and this has compounded his problems because he needs to regularly take her for medical check up and treatment. Though his wife is a hairdresser, she seems to be having a lot of difficulties in the business. The Molyko neighbourhood is full of hair salons and this has made the business very competitive. Moreover, the hair salon is not among the most preferred in the neighborhood because they lack money to equip well. At a certain period, Johnson tried his hands at buying and selling of books in order to augment his income but the business stopped because he used the capital to solve other pressing issues. He lives in a rented two-bed room plank house. Any one who knows him will admit that he does not put on expensive things and he has very few dresses and shoes, which he wears repeatedly. In his house, where this interview was conducted, one finds very simple and old furniture. He revealed to me that he has been forced against his wish to send all his children to government schools because tuition is free. One is in secondary school and the others in primary school.

Even though not rich, Johnson reveals to me that he does not fail to pay his tithes in church as well as meeting other financial demands of the church when the means is available. His faith in God still remains 'unshakable'. Just like Ogadima, Mary and Duru, Johnson seems very contented with his poverty. Explaining why he remains poor despite his strong faith in God and regular

payment of tithes, which could have prospered him in form of riches, he revealed that:

The Lord Jesus did not come to make all his followers rich. He Himself was never rich in material things. He came to preach the gospel to the poor so that they might become rich spiritually. Spiritual richness is more important than material riches. Those who listen to the gospel and become materially rich are expected to share their riches with others who might only be spiritually rich. I am spiritually rich and I am happy with that. Bear in mind that poverty is not always a sign of God's disapproval or curse. The majority of believers in the past, right from the time of Jesus Christ were never rich. It did not mean that God had cursed them. He gave them spiritual riches.

Johnson's argument reveals that some of them give tithes with no expectation of getting out of poverty but rather as an obligation to God's work. The essential point to be underscored from all these cases of failure in material prosperity is that 'believers' who find themselves in this situation, do not withdraw from the Lord. They use other biblical passages to justify the situation.

## Conclusion

In this study I have attempted to bring out the various factors, which have pushed Full Gospel Mission Cameroon to open up to the gospel of prosperity, after a long time of complete asceticism. Though many factors have been given to account for embracing the gospel of prosperity, these were made easy by the economic crisis, which has rocked the country since the mid eighties. The church, as a body, at this time had become self-sustaining and highly needed money to run its activities and was therefore compelled to go into business ventures and also appeal for financial support from members. In this wise, only the gospel of prosperity could effectively be used to appeal to members to support the church financially. On the part of the members, the gospel was welcome because of the hardship ushered in by the economic crisis and the inability to receive, in concrete terms, the reward of asceticism as a solution to their economic woes. The gospel of prosperity in this wise, provided an opportunity to members to accumulate in a bid to overcome the crisis.

Asceticism made members of the church to keep distance from non-members and even their own family members who did not belong to the church because of what they argued was the incessant quest for materialism by the general public, which was unbiblical. It also made the general public to believe that Full Gospel Mission was meant not only for the poor but also for those who prefer to suffer in life. The effect of this on the church was that membership was growing at a very slow rate since many people did not like the ascetic practices and some of its members were either defecting to new Pentecostal churches or backsliding to the mainline churches. This smooth transition within the last decades has

undoubtedly been one of the factors, which have accounted for the rapid increase in membership within this period. This recent decision of not retreating from the world has enabled members to embrace the opportunities of the material world thereby bridging the gap that had existed between them and others on material wealth. For some members, this has provided a means of enabling them to make the best of rapid social change and for others it has provided them a code of conduct which guards them from falling into poverty and destitution. For all, the gospel has provided a pattern for coming to terms with, and benefiting from modernity's dominant values and institutions.

The coming in of new Pentecostal groups with the gospel of prosperity as the economic message, the eventual embracing of the gospel by the biggest Pentecostal church in Cameroon and the association of mainline churches to this gospel is significant. This is so because it could be the beginning of some kind of unity not only amongst the Pentecostal groups but the entire Christian church in Cameroon. Doctrinal differences have always been at the forefront of disunity amongst churches in Cameroon. Frequent cases of church officials opposing the doctrines of others either through sermons, the media and publications is common in Cameroon<sup>5</sup>. This lack of unity has also led to the inability of the Christian churches to put up a common front in fighting the ills of the society, especially the decaying political structures, resulting from poor governance.

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<sup>5</sup> For more on disunity amongst the Christian churches in Cameroon, see, for example, Dah, J.N (1988) One hundred years of Roman Catholiism in Cameroon (1890-1990), Titi Nwel (1995) The churches and the democratic upheavals in Cameroon 1982-1993, Gifford (1997) African Christianity: Its public role and Casterman J-B (2003) Responses against the Roman Catholi Church.



## A comparative analysis of the reactions of the Roman Catholic Church and Full Gospel Mission to the economic crisis in Cameroon

In its 1990 *World Development Report*, the World Bank reported that the number of individuals living below the poverty level was on the decrease, Latin America, East and South Asia all showed substantial success in reducing poverty. The exception was Sub-Saharan Africa. The numbers living below the poverty level were projected to rise well into the present century and indeed this has become the case. Other indicators of social welfare all show that Africa is on a different trajectory from much of the rest of the less developed world. When South Africa is excluded, the region's average income is the lowest in the World-just \$315 per capita. The region, with about 460 million inhabitants, total income is just over that of Belgium, which has only about 11 million inhabitants-but is divided among 48 countries with median GDP of barely \$2 billion, about the output of a town of 60 thousand in a rich country. In Africa, unlike other developing regions, while the average output per capita had risen little by the end of the 1990s from 30 years before, in a majority of the countries, it has fallen by more than half. And at 13 percent of GDP, the region's average savings rate has been the lowest in the world (World Development Report 1990). According to the head of the United Nations Programme of Action for Africa's Economic Recovery and Development (1986-90), Africans were generally 40 percent worse off in 1990 than in 1980. Per capita consumption in Sub-Saharan Africa fell by one-fifth in the 1980s. Spending on health care declined by 50 percent, and on education by

25 percent. Since the mid 1990s as many as 10 thousand African children die each day from the effects of malnutrition and lack of rudimentary health care.<sup>1</sup> However, some gains were recorded towards the close of the 1990s. Despite this, the region entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century with still most of the world poorest countries (average income per capita still lower than at the end of the 1960s). The declining export shares in traditional primary products, little diversification into new lines of business, massive capital flights and loss of skills to other regions have made matters worse because these have eroded the place of the African in the global market. For these reasons, it is fair to say that Africa faces an economic crisis, with falling standards of living, increased exposure to epidemic, famine and progressive marginalization from the world economy. Moreover, political instability has impeded the creation of social, political and economic institutions thereby retarding progress towards limited self-sufficiency. A continued tendency towards authoritarian regimes has reflected another dimension of the crisis—that of the legitimacy of the state (Kennet and Kasongo 1992, Word Bank report 2000).

In Cameroon, the economic crisis has affected almost everybody and state institutions and has retarded progress significantly since the mid eighties. It has exacerbated poverty, misery and unemployment in the country. Public and private institutions continuously retrench workers and worst still, recruitment of new workers has drastically reduced. Salaries of workers have been slashed both in the private and public sectors several times and this has afflicted innumerable hardship on several families. Government efforts over the years to tackle the crisis have yielded little dividend.

Also worried about the crisis have been Christian bodies. The crisis has affected each religious group to a point, which they cannot effectively accomplish their objectives. Some have taken it as a duty to make their own spiritual contribution through prayer to bring the crisis to an end. They have also expressed their views on the crisis in the form of pastoral letters, sermons and the media. For instance, the Episcopal Conference of the Roman Catholic Church in Cameroon met in Yaounde in 1990 and deliberated on the economic crisis. In the pastoral letter issued at the end of the deliberation, the Prelates expressed their view on its causes, effects and how it could be solved (See Pastoral Letter of the Episcopal Conference of Cameroon 1990). On the causes, the prelates attributed the crisis to the ‘structures of sin’, which they believe dominate the world of today. They argue that the *‘structures of sin’ are deep-rooted in personal sin and*

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the numerous World Bank publications on Africa, portraying the changing situation, is Sub-Saharan Africa: from Crisis to Sustainable Growth: a Long Term Perspective Study (1989); The Social Dimensions of Adjustment in Africa: a Political Agenda (1990); Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth (1993); A Continent in Transition: Sub-Saharan Africa in the Mid 1990s (1995) and Can Africa Claim the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Overview (2000).

*thus always linked to the behavior of the individuals* (apparently referring here to those in political authority) *who introduce these structures, consolidate them and render them difficult to be removed.* They argue that the ‘structures of sin’ emanate from the world economic system, which is based solely on profit, egoism, exploitation of the poor and defenseless by the rich and powerful nations of the world. This order has imposed new models of economic, political, cultural and financial dependency on the weak countries and has impoverished them. They believe that it is not in compliance with the spirit of the gospel or the special teachings of the church for the rich nations to recuperate, at excessive interests, their loans to the poor nations. The Bishops then argue:

The consequences of this anti-gospel spirit are immeasurable in Cameroon. In public life, the absence of the spirit of citizenship, promotes amongst civil servants of all classes, corruption, laissez-faire, absenteeism, mercenary spirit and notorious embezzlement of public funds, which defy all vigilance. Custom fraud, tax evasion and misuse of public property are the habits that one observes right through the vital sectors of the economy of our country. Such behavior constitutes, for a Christian, grave faults, which are contrary not only to citizenship but again to morality in the Christian sense of the word.

In its meeting of 1993 in Bamenda, the Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) also expressed worry on the crisis. The Committee felt disturbed that the crisis has caused a majority of Cameroonians to be wallowing in misery and poverty while a few can still afford to live in affluence. It was its view that any policy conceived to recover from the crisis should be aimed at reducing the prices of goods and services in order to boost production and consumption. The Committee advocated a more efficient management of the economy and expressed worry on how all calls for more transparency seem to be undermined and have only exacerbated poor accountability, embezzlement and capital flight. It equally expressed the fear that if the crisis were not checked, the future of the Cameroonian children and their grand children would be mortgaged indefinitely for temporary comforts and conveniences of the moment. It gravely lamented on the rising crime wave in the country, which has destabilized production and argued that increasing banditry frustrates all efforts by honest Cameroonians to engage in gainful economic activities. It called on the government to step up its fight against this ill to enable a secured business atmosphere (Nyansako-Ni-Nku 1993).

The aim of this chapter is to make a comparative analysis of the reactions of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and Full Gospel Mission Cameroon (FGMC) to the crisis. On the RCC, special focus would be on the Bamenda ecclesiastical province, which is believed to be the most organized in Cameroon (Gifford 1997). The two churches are selected for the study because they somehow differ from each other on liberation theology and in explaining the causes of the crisis though they somehow converge on practical solutions (Akoko and Mbuagbo

2006). Secondly, this comparison is particularly important because Pentecostalism claim to bring material prosperity. Thirdly, the RCC is the largest mainline church in Cameroon and it could be taken to represent the mainline churches while FGMC, the biggest Pentecostal church, could represent the Pentecostal groups (Gifford 1997, Knorr 2001). Such a selection is good because it covers a greater proportion (Mainstream Christianity and Pentecostalism) of the Christian church in Cameroon and less time consuming. The article starts by giving a general picture of the economic crisis, then the churches and how each has been affected. It then points out how each interprets the crisis and the measures it proposes to fight it.

## Nature of the economic crisis

In 1982, the first president of sovereign Cameroon voluntarily handed over power to his constitutional successor, Prime Minister Paul Biya. At the time this political development took place, Cameroon was regarded by most international financial institutions as a middle-income developing country and one of the economic success stories in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Gross National Product had increased from 300 billion CFA in 1970 to 2,000 billion in 1982. Also, with an average growth rate of 6 percent between 1977 and 1982, Cameroon was ranked one of Africa's most credit worthy nations, with a triple-A rating. Cameroon was also described as 'the paradigm for African development' and 'an agricultural success story' partly because of the administration's encouragement of agricultural development rather than relying on oil production as some African countries such as Nigeria and Gabon had done following petroleum's discovery and exploitation. Western, particularly French financial support was important in the socio-economic progress Cameroon experienced during this period. The foundation of French economic involvement in Cameroon was established in a series of financial and economic agreements between France and Ahmadou Ahidjo's government<sup>2</sup> in 1959 and renegotiated with only minor changes in 1973. These agreements allowed France to become heavily involved in providing financial and technical aid to almost every phase of the Ahidjo's administration. For example, in 1960, the first year of Cameroon's independence, French aid to Ahidjo's administration totalled a Francs equivalent of 50 million US dollars, representing 80 percent of total revenue collected by the government (Jua 1991, Konings 1996, Takougang and Krieger 1998).

Since 1985, there has been a dramatic reversal in economic performance. GDP per capita declined by 6.3 percent per year from 1985-1993. The decline was

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<sup>2</sup> Ahmadou Ahidjo was the first president of independent Cameroon in 1960. He handed over power to his constitutional successor, Prime Minister Paul Biya in 1982.

precipitated by sharp drops in world prices for Cameroon's major exports (oil, coffee and cocoa) and appreciation of the U.S. dollar, which resulted in 70 per cent deterioration in the country's terms of trade during the period 1986-1993. The state's oil revenues for example, decreased from 350 million U.S dollars in 1985 to 207 millions in 1988. The economic policies of the Government also contributed to the country's economic downward spiral. Productivity declined in agriculture and other traditional growth sectors that had been neglected during the period of prosperity. Ultimately, export earning declined by 50 percent. Reckless loans by government-controlled banks created a prolonged crisis in the financial sector and forced many banks to close or liquidate. The crisis was also aggravated by massive capital flight estimated at 150 billion CFA a year, which was almost a quarter of the annual national budget. The free flow of currency between the CFA zone and France encouraged the Cameroonian elites to transfer their capital to French banks, which, moreover, supplied higher interest rates than the Cameroonian banks. A multitude of inefficient public enterprises eventually became bankrupt and created additional huge financial losses to the Government. With all these, the Cameroonian Government was not able to meet its external and domestic financial obligations. Several government projects proposed or started in the days of boom were either abandoned or suspended because of severe financial difficulties. Many foreign companies that had hitherto invested in Cameroon were forced to leave, thereby exacerbating unemployment. The government was faced with much difficulty in paying cash crops farmers and the result was that many farmers switch from the production of these crops to food crops, which could easily be sold in local markets (Konings 1996).

In a bid to reverse this trend, the government embraced the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) prescribed by the Breton Wood Institutions as alternative development paradigms to the state-centred approach, which it declared as outmoded and unrealistic (Tanga and Mbuagbo 2002). The new approach entailed the withdrawal of the state as a major player in the economy, the introduction of neo-liberal economic principles that lay emphasis on market forces as the engine for growth and development. It also required that the state democratises and the inclusion of civil society as an integral and active agent in the restructuring process. It was widely believed by bank policy makers that civil society could be the alternative route to Africa's development dilemma, and therefore its inclusion in the exercise became an important benchmark for continued economic assistance from the World Bank and other bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors.

Because of the large external debts servicing by the government, net transfers from multilateral funding sources became negative in the early 1990s. The system of international aid was a factor in this reversal. After much evidence of

corruption in the late 1980s and failures to fulfil the conditions of the structural adjustment programs, the international financial bodies became very wary about supplying credits. But Cameroon's low capacity and the lack of communication also contributed to the meagre disbursement of credits.

To lighten the problems in the economy, Cameroon applied to be considered a highly indebted and poor country and the request was granted under the Enhanced Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, though this was not intended from the beginning. In this program, some of the debts of the benefiting country are cancelled and some projects are funded. The country reached the decision point in October 2000 and got a very substantial debt cancellation of \$2 billion in nominal terms (\$1.26 billion NPV). This could help to reduce the amount of government revenue spent on debt servicing from 23 percent in 2000 to 10 percent by 2008 and to cut the ratio of total debt to exports from 200 percent in 2000 to 120 percent in 2001 and 100 percent in 2007 (Tamba 2001).

The meeting of the Paris Club to authorise the start of providing funds for the various projects under this program was held in January 2001. Part of the money was then disbursed to the Central Bank of Central African States to be disbursed to the Cameroon Ministry of Finance for state use, on condition that the preconditions imposed on the government are met. The effects of debt reduction have not yet been felt however because despite the availability of the first part of the money in the HIPC account in the bank, all the preconditions for making out the payment have not been met. The completion point, which the country is yet to attain still remains among other things, on drafting a final version of a plan for the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF). This was expected to be ready by spring 2002 but unfortunately the country has not yet produced one, which is satisfactory to the funding body.<sup>3</sup>

## Churches under comparison and how each has been affected by the crisis

### *The Roman Catholic Church*

The Roman Catholic Church is no doubt the largest Christian group in Cameroon, though it was introduced into the country in 1890, much later than the other mainline churches (the Baptists in 1844 and the Presbyterian Church founded by the Basel Mission in 1884). It is truly a national church because, others have tended to be geographically delimited in the country, for example,

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Cameroon Report in *African Economic outlook*, (2001/2002) published by the African Development Bank, Development Centre of the Organisation for Co-operation and Development (OECD) on the economic performance of Cameroon.

the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) is an Anglophone church, the Eglise Presbyterienne Camerounaise is centred among the Bulus around Yaounde, the Union des Eglise Baptistes Camerounaise around the Littoral province and the Lutheran Church around the Adamawa province. However, this trend is slowly changing for a number of reasons among which are the determination of each group to plant churches in other areas and functionaries and businessmen who bring in their churches into areas they transfer to. In nearly all the provinces, most of the major churches can now be found, though this does not cancel the fact that each church has a centre of gravity in the area where it took root (Gifford 1997).

The Catholic Church in Cameroon is divided into five ecclesiastical provinces (Bamenda, Yaounde, Douala, Garoua and Bertoua) with twenty-three dioceses. The ecclesiastical province of Bamenda covers four dioceses (Buea, Mamfe, Kumbo and Bamenda). The province corresponds with the South West and North West civil administrative provinces of Cameroon, otherwise called the Anglophone Cameroon. It comprises thirteen civil administrative Divisions: six from the South West and seven from the North West province. This section of the country, which used to be known as Southern Cameroons, was part of the United Nation trust territory placed under British rule until 1961 when the world body gave it (including the northern section called Northern Cameroon) two options of independence: to either join the Federal Republic of Nigeria or to become part of French Cameroun. A plebiscite was conducted to this effect on February 11, 1961 and the northern section opted to join the Federal Republic of Nigeria while the southern section voted to join the Republic of Cameroun (LeVine 1964, Eyongetah and Brain 1974, Ngoh 1990, Chiabi 1997). Though it is part of the Republic of Cameroon, it retains the Anglo-Saxon tradition in most of its institutions while the rest of the country maintains the French tradition.

The Bamenda ecclesiastical province, like others, has been highly affected by the economic crisis and worried over this, the archbishop has on several occasions addressed the issue to his priests and faithful in letters and sermons. This problem has also been aggravated because the church authorities did little to encourage the local churches to be financially self-supporting. The reason for this was that much financial and missionary assistance used to be provided by benefactors and donors abroad for church projects and some other activities. Whereas the contributions from these external sources were frequent in the past, they are today a rare phenomenon.<sup>4</sup> Rare, because the Western missionaries working with the church made most connections for assistance but now most of them are retiring and they are not being replaced because the church is becoming

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<sup>4</sup> See, For example, Maimo's presentation during the Seventh Bamenda Ecclesiastic province Annual Convention in Bamenda in 1999 entitled *Financial Self-sufficiency in our Local church*.

self-governing and local priests are being trained. Moreover, foreign bodies are no more interested in providing aid because they want the church to be self-supporting except in projects, which have been evaluated to be very important but costly. Also since Cameroonians have a track record of misappropriation of public funds, some donors are reluctant to disburse money when they believe it would not be properly accounted for. The crisis became so severe that for the first time (1999), the ecclesiastical province had to include a Finance Commission in its convention. The convention, which took place in Bamenda, had a Finance Commission, which was charged with deliberating on how the diocese and parishes can achieve material and financial self-sufficiency in the administration of the church.<sup>5</sup>

Among the services provided by the church, which are highly affected by the crisis is education at all levels (nursery, primary and secondary). Financial difficulties have made the future of this service, to which the church attaches great importance, a matter of concern. The education crisis has its genesis from the government inconsistent policies on subvention to private schools.

Apart from external assistance from other mission bodies, it used to be state policy, when the economy was in a boom, to make grants-in-aid to religious bodies for the running of some vital services. For instance, schools and hospitals, since they were carrying out services that the state would have been obliged to provide unaided if they did not. Up till 1976, the school system in the British tradition, which obtained in the present ecclesiastical province of Bamenda, made it a legal obligation on the part of the state, to pay Grants-in-Aid to Approved Voluntary Agencies (Baptists, Basel Mission (now Presbyterian) and Catholic Schools). The actual amount of Grants-in-Aid payable was calculated by deducting the assumed local contribution (a figure which represented the expected income from school fees, and varied according to the ability of the community to pay) from the recognised expenses of a school, this later figure being made up of the total salary bill together with an allowance for other expenses. The Grants-in-Aid regulations in the British Cameroon were spelt out in the Education Ordinance No. 17 of 1952. The provisions of that ordinance in the matter of Grants-in-Aid were substantially retained in Law No 69/LW/11 of September 1969 on '*to regulate the conduct of Primary Education in West Cameroon*'. In the system, all the teachers' salaries and insurance contributions, the costs for improvement and repair of buildings were provided by the state. The state equally provided medical assistance to the schools and grants to Teachers Training Colleges were given by the state according to their personnel. Teachers

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<sup>5</sup> See the report of the Bamenda Ecclesiastical province Seventh Catholic Convention, which took place in Mankon 1999 and the pastoral plan, which was a follow-up of this convention for more on this commission and others.



were paid according to the same scale, taking into account their qualification and length of service and not whether they belonged to confessional or government schools.<sup>6</sup>

On 8 July 1976, the Cameroon Government passed a new Law (No. 76-15 of July 1976) to reorganize Private Education in Cameroon. This Law abolished the legislative texts, which had governed the conduct of Education in Anglophone Cameroon up to that date. In so doing, it retained nothing of value in the legislation underlying the educational system in the former West Cameroon. The Grants-in Aids regulations as spelt out in the 1952 Ordinance and in the 1969 Law were abolished and replaced by what is known as 'Government Subvention'. The notion of Approved Voluntary Agencies as enshrined in the legislative texts of West Cameroon was abandoned and all private agencies, confessional and non-confessional alike, were lumped together under the title 'Private Education'.

As from 1976 onwards, confessional schools began to experience a new situation in which government's participation in the financing of confessional schools was not governed by any principled criteria. Agents of the Ministry or Ministries concerned unilaterally and arbitrarily decided the amount of subventions, which the government paid to these schools annually.

The chancy, problematical and uncertain nature of this system of government subventions starkly stands out in Law No. 87/022 of 17 December 1987 whose section 16 is couched as in the following terms:

- a) The funds of a private educational establishment shall be derived from;
  - The proprietor's own funds,
  - School fees (tuition, board, canteen),
  - Proceeds from the various activities of the establishment or agency,
  - Donations or legacies obtained in accordance with the laws in force,
  - Assistance from parent-teacher associations.
- b) Taking into account the available resources, the state or local authorities may, if necessary, grant subsidies to the proprietor of a given establishment.
- c) Government Grants-in-Aid shall be given on the basis of criteria laid down by Decree.

According to the Catholic Education Secretary Buea, government subventions to Catholic schools began to register a significant and regular decline from 1985. For instance, for the year 1990/1991, the government decided to allocate only two-thirds of the amount of subvention it had allocated for the previous year 1989/1990. The following year, (1991/1992), the same two-thirds was allocated as subvention but this was disbursed in three irregular instalments. For

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<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare (1963), West Cameroon educational policy-Investment in Education, West Cameroon Government Press-Buea.

1992/1993, the amount dropped and has persistently been dropping and irregular, as payments are made in some years and in others not.

Faced with this precarious situation, the National Episcopal Conference met in 1989 to deliberate on the problems of Catholic Education. At the end of the conference, they came out with a pastoral letter, which did not provide any practical or concrete solution to the crisis. In the letter, the Bishops only drew the attention of Christians and all people of good will to the serious problem of Catholic Education. After presenting the church's educational philosophy and a short historical reminder in the letter on how the state used to provide maximum support to Approved Voluntary Agencies thereby making schools to function properly, the Bishops lamented on the situation at the time. They called on the government and every Christian to help rescue the schools from collapsing.<sup>7</sup>

The situation became worse as the economic crisis persisted. The state became poorer and poorer and could no longer fulfil its obligation of enabling these schools to survive. The Roman Catholic church, just like the other churches, felt the effects more than the non-confessional schools because they had relied on state subventions for long and had provided good working conditions to their teachers, which they could no longer afford to do due to state's intransigency in subventions.

Within a short time (i.e. before 1993) that subventions were slashed and its disbursement very irregular, the mission accumulated much debt in education. A report from the Catholic Education Secretariat Buea reveals that the accumulated arrears of salaries, social security contributions and taxes for Catholic teachers of the Buea diocese alone had reached 283,626,277 CFA in 1993. It became increasingly difficult for the church to employ new teachers.<sup>8</sup> This appalling situation definitely had some adverse effects on the performance of the pupils and students. For instance, the 1993/1994 beginning of year report of the Catholic Education Secretary of the Buea Diocese reveals an average drop of eight percent in the performance of primary school pupils in the diocese, when compared with the previous year and a five percent drop in secondary education.

This brought incalculable suffering to the teachers, as they had to stay for more than fourteen months without receiving salaries. Without money, some of the teachers who stayed in rented houses were evicted because they could not pay their rents, others were unable to travel either to go home on holidays or to return from their homes to their schools, some could not provide adequate feeding for their families, others could not pay school fees for their own children and some

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<sup>7</sup> For more, see, The National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon: Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of Cameroon about Catholic Education, January 1989, SOPECAM, Yaounde.

<sup>8</sup> See letter of the Catholic Education Secretary Buea, August 1993, to the Provincial Delegate of Labour South West on the plight of Catholic teachers and measures adopted for the survival of Catholic schools.

were unable to provide medical care for members of their families due to the fact that they had not been paid. As a result of this, most of the teachers had to involve themselves in diverse activities to raise additional income. Farming and trading seemed to have been the most favoured activities because with the former, one needs just a piece of land which could be hired or bought cheaply in a distance bush and with the later, a few items, which could be used to start a small business, can eventually make it grow. Moreover, these activities, if properly planned, do not disturb the teacher from performing his normal teaching assignment on weekdays. For farming, it could conveniently be carried out on Saturdays while for trading goods could be purchased on Saturdays and stocked in a place where someone or a relative is employed to be selling. Below are case studies of individuals (Epah and Nsai) who got themselves involved in these activities in a bid to overcome the economic hardship faced by Roman Catholic teachers. While Epah went into farming, which pays a lot in Buea, Nsai went into petit trading between Bamenda and Kumbo. Each of them became successful in the activity and they were able to take care of their families.

*Mr Epah John (primary school teacher)*

Mr Epah, who was a teacher in St Anthony School Buea in 1992, was one of the teachers who had to look for an alternative solution to the economic hardship. He is retired and a father of six. He comes from Meme Division, though he was born in Buea where his parents were labourers of the Cameroon Development Cooperation. He revealed to me that with the increasing hardship, he got involved in farming. He had problems in paying his rents, fees for his two children in Catholic colleges and another who was enrolled in his own school and in meeting other financial obligations. Moreover his wife, who was unemployed, made little or no contribution in the running of the family. To look for a long-term solution to his problems, he borrowed 400 thousand CFA at an interest rate of 15 CFA. per 1000 per month from a thrift-and-loan scheme (*tontines or njangis*) and bought a piece of land for farming. He did farming of yams, tomatoes and vegetables. He, together with other members of his family, worked on the farm on Saturdays and on some weekdays when he felt like not going to school because of poor working conditions. Within two years, he was able to pay back the loan including the interest. In addition, he was able to build his own house (his living home) in Buea on a piece of land he had acquired before the crisis. He revealed that farming paid him more than the teaching job which he termed 'God's service to the kids'.

*Mr Nsai Fidelis (secondary school teacher).*

On his part, Mr Nsai Fidelis, who was a teacher in Saint Augustine College Kumbo, got involved in petit trading which now has culminated in one of the biggest provision shops in Kumbo. Mr Nsai was then unmarried but claims to have had lots of financial commitments. His father died when he was still in form five in Saint Augustine College Kumbo in 1982. He is the first child in the family and he has five younger ones behind him. Because of the death of his father, he barely succeeded to go through University education in Yaounde where he read English Language. He was employed to teach in this college immediately he graduated from Yaounde in 1988. The family responsibilities he had were enormous, as he had to continue to finance the education of his younger ones. Unfortunately, his mother was a mere subsistence farmer and she could contribute nothing significant for the education of the rest of the children. Mr Nsai revealed that his ambitions in life were to go higher than the present level in education but because of family responsibilities he was obliged to pick a job with the present qualification. When salaries were slashed, he got involved in petit trading in 1994. He started with buying and retailing of items such as toilet roll, palm oil, soap etc in small quantities, which he placed on a shelf in front of his house. He bought these items in Kumbo but with increasing profits, he started going to Bamenda on weekends to buy from wholesalers and in larger quantities. The items too became diversified. As the shelf could no longer contain all the items, he fought hard and got a stall in the Kumbo main market. His wife that he married in 1997 runs the shop, which is among the biggest in the town. Mr Nsai revealed that this business provides him a source of income, which is higher than his salary with the church. He is able to take care of his family, has constructed his living home and saves money in the Credit Union every month. His three kids, brothers and sisters have little or no financial difficulties with their education.

The above cases illustrate teachers who became successful in other ventures aimed at supplementing the little salary they received from the mission. However, it would be unrealistic to believe that every teacher became successful in whatever undertaking he/she took to supplement the income. While some tried and failed for one reason or the other, others did not have that enterprising spirit to even think of doing some other thing to supplement the little salary. In fact, these were the categories of teachers we may argue suffered the crisis most. Molua and Njang are examples of teachers who fall in these categories. While Molua tried his hands in organising extra classes for GCE candidates, wherein he could raise some money but failed, Njang did not just attempt doing anything else. He instead embarked on drinking after working hours, mobilising teachers

to mount pressure on the church to improve their working conditions and in politics.

*Molua (secondary school teacher)*

Molua is of the Bakweri ethnic group of South West Province. He is a fair and slim gentleman, who seems to be quite active in his local congregation in Tiko. This interview was conducted at the church premises on Saturday where he was controlling the cleaning of the churchyard in preparation for Sunday worship. He is about 44 years old and a father of four boys. He was born in Buea where he did his primary and secondary education in Catholic school Buea town and Bishop Rogan College respectively. He did his high school in the Cameroon College of Arts Science and Technology (CCAST) Bambili, from 1982-84 where he obtained his GCE advanced level in the Sciences. He then proceeded to the University of Ibadan Nigeria where he obtained a B Sc. degree in Botany in 1987. On leaving Nigeria he was employed by the Catholic Education Authority to teach Biology in Christ the King College Tiko. He got married the year he was employed to teach in Tiko.

He was employed at a time the financial situation of the church was not yet precarious. When the situation changed a few years after his employment, like other teachers, he was highly affected. He could no longer take proper care of his household. Moreover, his wife was not doing anything, which could contribute to the running of the home. In the midst of this, he tried to run evening classes in the premises of a primary school in Tiko in 1993. These classes were aimed at teaching GCE candidates who had not the opportunity to attend full-time regular classes in schools, for instance, workers and housemaids. He tried it for two years but failed for some reasons. The first is that it was closed down because he had no authorisation from the Ministry of National Education to run such classes. Secondly, there were no enough candidates, which made it difficult for him to raise enough money to run the place and make profit. Since then Molua has not tried to do any other thing. With no other option, he has continued to rely on the small salary the church is paying him. He was transferred some four years ago to the Catholic Mount Camel College Muea near Buea to be the discipline master of the school.

*Njang (primary school teacher)*

Njang, about 54 years old, was born in Manyu division of the South West Province. He is fat and looks very humorous. He is married and a father of five children. After his primary education in Manyu Division, he taught as a Probationer Teacher (PT) for two years before proceeding to the Catholic Teacher Training College (TTC) Nchang where he obtained his grade two and

one certificates. After obtaining his grade one certificate, he was posted to teach in Catholic School Mamfe where he taught for a number of years and was transferred to Okoyong (a nearby school) as headmaster. He was headmaster at a time salaries were good. He took advantage of this and was able to build a house in Mamfe town. He was dropped as headmaster in 1986 for a reason he refused to disclose to me and transferred to Catholic School Fiango, Kumba and again to Catholic School Buea town in 1990. While in Buea, Mr Njang became a political activist with the opposition Social Democratic Front (SDF) party. He told me he was and is still very active in the SDF party. He handled the position of a ward secretary in Buea town before the party could be legalised. Unlike in the Northwest Province where the party was founded and it has its stronghold, very few people courageously identify with it in the Southwest Province because of fear of being arrested and detained by members of the state security. After the legalization of the party, he became its first secretary of the Buea electoral district, a position he handled for more than seven years.

He too suffered like other teachers of the church. The situation would have been worse, if his wife had not read nursing privately and is currently employed in a private clinic in Buea. The little salary she received augmented her husband's little income and they could barely manage to send their children to cheap schools and run the home.

While other teachers were struggling to augment their salaries with other activities, Njang was more involved in political activism and drinking in bars where politics was highly debated. Of course, not that he spent his money on drinking but his friends and others who loved his political activism usually supplied him drinks. Though active in politics, he was still very concerned with the situation of teachers of the church. He told me he was at the forefront of the formation of a trade union for Roman Catholic teachers. He was able to mobilize teachers of the church at primary and secondary school levels for the formation of this union. He must have been inspired to do this by the prevailing political situation, which had made Cameroonians to be conscious of their rights that included freedom of association. Moreover, his experience in joining some other Cameroonians in mobilising the masses to join the SDF party in condemning the ills of the ruling party gave him an added advantage. He was the pioneer president of the Buea branch of the union. Njang seems ironically now to be very contented with the little he receives though he argued that he would prefer to fight for others to enjoy even if that is going to cost him to live a poor man throughout his life. He was apparently referring here to his front role position in the Roman Catholic teachers union and the SDF party. He told me that as soon as he retires from teaching in a few years from now he would go to live in his house in Mamfe. While in Mamfe he would be a full-time politician in the SDF party.

From all the cases cited, it seems teachers (including those who became successful in other financial undertakings) were not interested in resigning from the mission despite the suffering. Since the mission too did not embark on forceful retrenchment, the teachers decided to embark on measures that could mount pressure on the church to improve their working conditions. They formed the Catholic Teachers Association (CATA) in 1994 to put pressure on government for better working conditions. There were threats of strike from the association, which definitely hampered the smooth running of the school year.

The creation of a union for Catholic teachers at this time was not unconnected with the general clamour for political liberalisation and the economic crisis at the time, which had given room for the creation of a number of trade unions aimed at fighting for better working conditions. For instance, the Teachers Association of Cameroon (TAC) and the Cameroon Anglophone Public Servants' Union (CAPSU). Other unions, which were political in nature and were aimed at defending specific courses, too emerged at this time. These included the Confederation of Anglophone Parents-Teachers' Association of Cameroon (CAPTAC), the Cameroon Anglophone Students' Association (CANSA), the Anglophone Common Law Association, the Association of Anglophone Journalists, the Anglophone Youth Council, and the Anglophone Women's League. Some of these unions scored tremendous successes in their struggles. For instance, TAC and CAPTAC succeeded in forcing the government to create a GCE Board to manage this Anglophone examination, which they were accusing the government of trying to destroy.<sup>9</sup>

In the midst of threats of strikes by Catholic teachers, coupled with the school fees paid, enrolment dropped in some of the Roman Catholic schools. In the Buea diocese between 1993-1998, enrolment in some of the rural schools dropped drastically as those communities fought to open free government schools as their own way to survive the economic crisis. For instance, the Education Secretary revealed that St Mary School Nchang had an enrolment of more than eight hundred before 1994 but this number dropped to almost half with the opening of the nearby Government school in 1995. Despite this, the church did not close any of its schools.

Given that the National Episcopal Conference did not come out with any practical solution and the situation deteriorated further, the Bishops of the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province decided to take some practical measures aimed at putting an end to any further increase in arrears of salaries owed to teachers in

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<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Konings and Nyamnjoh (2004) 'President Paul Biya and the 'Anglophone Problem' in Cameroon', in: Mbaku and Takougang (eds) *Leadership challenge in Africa: Cameroon under Paul Biya*. Africa world press Trenton, P. 191-234.

order not to aggravate a situation that was already catastrophic and also to ensure the survival of Catholic schools. The measures taken by the Bishops were:

Teachers of the church who had attained the age of sixty years were advised to go on retirement. This measure equally applied to those who had attained this age but had fraudulently reduced their real ages.<sup>10</sup>

Teachers who had attained the age of fifty-five and had already put in fifteen years or more in service were strongly advised to go on anticipated retirement.

Salaries of all serving teachers were reduced by fifty percent so as to enable the schools function within the income that the Catholic Education Authority itself could raise, mindful of the ominous silence of the Cameroon Government on the question of subventions. The Bishops then directed their Education Secretaries to begin implementing the above measures from 1 July 1993. As a reaction, the church was dragged to law courts by some of the teachers who did not support the measures (Ngoh 2000).

One of the affected teachers, who on the contrary, has argued that the crisis was more advantages to his school and the Catholic teachers is Mr Edie Chrysantus (Head Teacher of St Joseph School Tiko since 1992). He comes from the North West Province and he has been teaching with the Roman Catholic Mission for over thirty-five years. He revealed that in the midst of the suffering and bad results, he introduced extra classes for the final year pupils in the morning before official working hours and in the afternoon, which they paid some small money. The money raised from this was used in augmenting the teachers' earnings and the amount received by each staff was determined by the number of hours put in. His teachers became motivated that each of them tried to put in as many hours as possible. He revealed that his intentions were two-fold: to create an additional source of income for the teachers and to continue maintaining good results in official examinations despite the falling standards in other schools. He argued that his objectives were met because teachers made money from it and examination results improved much more than in the previous years, hundred percent for three successive years from 1993 to 1996 for the First School Leaving Certificate Examination and more candidates were passing the Common Entrance Examination into secondary schools on list A. He also argued that by engaging in other income generating activities, mission teachers had little time to indulge in unprofitable activities such as excessive drinking during free hours or days. Moreover, they became shrewd in spending their small earnings, which was not the case at the time salaries were good.

Apart from schools, the economic crisis has also affected many projects, which had been started by some parishes or local churches. Some have been

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<sup>10</sup> Reducing real age is an illegal practice so common in Cameroon. People do this to either stay longer in service or get themselves recruited into certain occupations, which prescribe a maximum age limit.



halted and others are being carried out gradually whenever little money becomes available. This involves projects, which do not have external funding. Financial contributions from members for such projects have become minimal because of the crisis. For example, in an interview with the parish priest of the Molyko Catholic Church of Buea on a church hall project of the Parish, which construction work is very slow, the priest told me that though the project is so vital for the parish, the work is slow because of financial difficulties. He revealed that before the crisis, any project of that magnitude, when envisaged, took a short time to realize because the financial sources were available. Regular Sunday offerings has drastically dropped and the only period that a relatively substantial amount of money could be raised is during harvest thanks giving, which is once a year. With this, the work is slowed down.

Also affected by the crisis are its priests because the facilities, which they used to be provided with, have drastically been curtailed since the church can no longer afford to provide all. For instance, each parish priest was entitled to a car, food and a cook, free medical care, in spite of their monthly stipend. There are at the moment some parish Priests without these facilities. This, no doubt, does not enhance the performance of the priests and therefore impact negatively on the church. As a solution to the car crisis, the archbishop of the diocese of Bamenda instituted a car-pool system in which no one owns a car individually; all belong to the diocese, for the work of the diocese. So if a priest's congregation, relatives or friends buy him a car, it belongs to the diocese and remains at its disposal. Also the user of the car pays so much per kilometre to the diocese for the use of the car (the rate increases for trips outside the diocese in order to discourage private trips), with the result that by the time the car needs replacing, the diocese has built up a sizable sum towards its replacement. This arrangement not only ensures judicious use of the cars but also enables every priest to have access to a car (Gifford 1997).

### *Full Gospel Mission*

Full Gospel Mission Cameroon is the oldest Pentecostal church in Cameroon only after the Apostolic Church and the biggest in terms of adherents and establishments. Reverend Werner Knorr introduced the church, which is of German origin, in Cameroon in 1961 under the sponsorship of the United Missions Friends Inc of Germany (Knorr 2001). According to statistics of 2000 from the office of the National Superintendent of the church, it has a membership of roughly 59,062 with 518 assemblies (local churches) located in all provinces of the country. Membership has been increasing rapidly and the Mission has penetrated all nooks and crannies of the country and beyond. The high rate of growth can be attributed to some of its doctrines and practices such as divine

healing/protection, good leadership, political liberalization, evangelisation strategies, its caring traditions towards the needy and a shift from complete asceticism to a gospel of prosperity.<sup>11</sup> The church has gone down in record as the first in Cameroon, which has extended its activities beyond the national frontiers. Its presence is felt in Chad, the Central African Republic, Nigeria and in its future projects plan (5 years) 2001-2005, it intended to penetrate the Republics of Congo and Gabon, though this could not be realised due to the economic crisis. It also goes down in record as the first Pentecostal church to have been introduced into Nigeria from Cameroon. This development is interesting because Pentecostalism was introduced into Cameroon from Nigeria and a majority of the existing Pentecostal groups in the country were founded by Nigerian (Knorr 2001, Akoko 2002).

Compared to the Roman Catholic Church, it is a relatively young Mission, with few members and very little infrastructure and investments. While it might be regarded as an independent church in the sense that it is administered by Cameroonians with its headquarters in Cameroon, the situation is different with the Roman Catholic in Cameroon because the Vatican has a big say in the administration of the church. The bishops and archbishops work with dictates from the Vatican and as such any major decision that is to be taken, for example, the creation of a new diocese and the appointment of Bishops are done by Rome.

The Mission has equally been affected by the economic crisis in that members have difficulties in meeting their financial obligations, such as tithes, to the church thus making it difficult for it to run its activities successfully. Even if members had to pay their tithes, the total amount received by the church would definitely be smaller than when the income level was high at the time the economy was in a boom. This is because tithe is an obligatory one-tenth payment of an individual's income to the church as prescribed by the Bible and as such, the lower the income the lower the amount that could be raised and vice versa. Compared with the mainline churches, members of Pentecostal groups take this financial obligation to the church seriously and do all to pay, thereby making it a major source of income to the churches. If members are unable to pay or pay just little, the church will raise little money for its activities. In an interview with the Financial Secretary of the church, it was revealed that the church used to collect about 700 million CFA annually from members before the crisis as tithes but with the crisis, it has been so difficult to raise 300 million CFA. The pastor of Nkun assembly also revealed to me that, though a village and small assembly, he could collect up to 1.5 million CFA annually from the members of his assembly

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<sup>11</sup> For detail explanation of the factors, which have accounted for the rapid growth of the church, see, for example, Akoko R. (Unpublished) 'An overview of Full Gospel Mission Cameroon and the factors accounting for its rapid growth'.

as tithes but this amount has dropped drastically to less than 800 million CFA. Some individuals interviewed also revealed that the crisis has reduced the amount of money, which they give to the church for tithes. For example, Mr Enye Paul, a teacher with the government, earned a monthly salary of about 270 thousand CFA before the crisis and he paid an annual tithes of about 324 thousand CFA, but when the government decided to cut salaries of civil servants twice in 1994 as a measure to fight the crisis, his salary dropped to less than 120 million CFA and his annual contribution as tithes to the church has dropped to about 144 million CFA.

The Mission has been receiving financial assistance from foreign bodies for specific projects. For instance, the Assemblies of God of America joined other European Missions bodies to purchase some building plots and erected church buildings (Njemo 2001). This kind of assistance is not on a regular basis and it is usually directed to specific projects when solicited. For instance, a congregation in Oklahoma, USA, and some Christians from Germany financed the buying of the plot and construction of the Gospel Centre in Yaounde, after a request made by Reverend P. Schneider (A German Missionary who spearheaded evangelistic campaigns in the 1970s) (Schneider 2001). The bodies giving the assistance cannot, in any way, shoulder all the financial obligations or activities of the church. For instance, paying for all building plots and putting up the structures, paying salaries of workers and taking care of rallies and crusades. The Mission relies much on members to raise money for such undertakings and not external assistance, which are not obligatory and sometime with strings attached. Members are facing difficulties in meeting this obligation and the total amount, which the church used to collect as tithes, has dropped and this has brought financial crisis to the church. At national level, some vital projects of the church, such as the main building of the national headquarters in Douala, have been slowed down or suspended. At the local level, the Molyko assembly of the church is facing difficulties in raising money to build a library/guest house project on a plot, which it long acquired.

Full Gospel Mission, wherever it is, is characterised by frequent evangelisation campaigns, rallies and crusades. These activities have reduced in most districts because they require much money. As earlier mentioned, the church's ambition of penetrating the Republic of Congo and Gabon before 2005 was thwarted because of lack of the necessary funds to send missionaries to these countries.

Compared with Catholic education, Full Gospel Mission schools have not faced the type of education crisis, which the Catholic Church experienced because all its schools started during this period of the crisis. The schools have been opened taking into consideration the economic crisis and everything is

planned within the context of the crisis, for instance, low salaries for teachers and putting up the barest infrastructure.

## Reactions to the crisis: How each group interprets the crisis and provides a solution

### *The Roman Catholic Church*

In its 4<sup>th</sup> Enugu Diocesan Priests' Annual Seminar held in 1991 on *Human Rights, Human Dignity and Catholic Social Teachings*, the Catholic Priests of the Diocese expressed grievance to see the wanton misery and suffering into which an increasing majority of Africans were condemned to live especially through the implementation of certain forms of structural adjustment programs by various African governments. They argued that though these economic reform programs might be appealing to foreign business men and to the London and Paris Clubs, the IMF and World Bank, etc they are unacceptable because they subordinate the human person to other humanly defined goals of economic benefits. They thus contradict one basic principle of Catholic social teachings namely that all economic and socio-political programs find their justification as a service to man. In other words, the sufferings are completely unacceptable because they lack a comparable justification. The priests also felt scandalised that the suffering majority are taunted and insulted by those they called the *nouveaux riches* who make an extravagant display of their often ill-gotten wealth. They appealed to the consciences of these people to show mercy and compassion towards the suffering lots by sharing their wealth and fortunes with them (Obiora and Ugonna 1992).

In line with the above social teachings of the church, the RCC, as discussed in the introduction of this work, has been so worried with and vocal on political and economic issues in Cameroon which afflict suffering on the masses. This quest for a society, which is free of suffering, has always been the source of conflicts between the church and the state in Cameroon. The Pastoral Letter of the Episcopal Conference of Cameroon of 1990 speaks clearly that the church also attributes the economic crisis to political mismanagement, which does not auger well for the politicians (Titi Nwel 1995, Akoko and Mbuagbo 2006).

The Archbishop of Bamenda made another pronouncement on the crisis in September 1993 when he realized that it was persisting. This was in a special address to the priests of his diocese entitled, *Some special thoughts on Cameroon economic crisis*. In the address, the bishop felt it necessary to call the attention of his clergies on the realities of the economic difficulties faced by faithful of the diocese because he realized that this was affecting the diocese closely. To illustrate the gravity of the situation, he quoted Wall Street Journal and the World Bank reports, which revealed that the economy of Cameroon had within the last

six years declined. He called on his priests to be in full solidarity with their Christians visibly hard hit and impoverished by a catastrophic economic crisis. He cited the plight of Catholic teachers and called on the priests to reflect on ways, which the local church can live within its meager means. He invited them to self and collective scrutiny of their lifestyles so that they reflect true solidarity with their people. While acknowledging that foreign involvement in Cameroon's economy has worked more to the detriment of the country, he then argued that the Cameroon economic situation can only be resolved if the political scene is not characterized by groups that are excluded from meaningful participation in national life and other groups (referring to the ruling party and the Biya ethnic group in particular) which want to maintain a monopoly of power. In several other addresses, the Archbishop has sought to sensitize the priests and Christians of the diocese to the awareness of the crisis.

This argument clearly reveals that the RCC and the PCC hold that bad governance has contributed significantly to the economic crisis. This is explicit in the declarations of the Episcopal Conference of Cameroon in 1990 and the PCC Synod Committee of 1993 on the economic crisis, discussed in the introduction of this paper.

The Catholic Church has been fighting to minimise the crisis among its members right from the beginning in various ways:

Firstly, when mission bodies started facing financial difficulties arising from reduction and irregularity of state subventions, some of them closed down some of their schools because of the increasingly limited means. For instance, the PCC had to close down some ninety primary schools in 1992. The result of this was that the teachers were retrenched and life became difficult for them and their families.<sup>12</sup> The RCC did not close any of its establishments but instead opened more. One of the reasons given to me for this decision by the Catholic Education Secretary Buea was that the mission does not believe in retrenching its workers because of the difficulties these people would face in picking other jobs. Alternatively, the mission reduced salaries by 50 percent, which was better than the other option. However, the very old teachers and those who had put in more years of service and were believed to have accumulated some wealth, after working for a long time, were advised to retire so as to create jobs for the young ones. Despite this, CATA has continued to put pressure on the authorities of the church to increase salaries because of the rising cost of living.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See memo presented to President Paul Biya by the Moderator of the PCC in Buea on 27 September 1991 in which he elaborated on the plight of mission schools and also his address on the occasion of the 35th Presbyterian Church day, 15 November 1992.

<sup>13</sup> See The Herald newspaper of 17 April 2004 on the confrontation between the executive members of CATA of the Bamenda diocese and the Education Secretary on the rejection of low salaries by CATA.

Secondly the Catholic Women Association (CWA) is encouraged by the authorities of the church to alleviate poverty amongst women. The CWA is a movement within the Roman Catholic Church, which started as a non-profit making, apostolic group in 1960 in Buea with the sole objective of building a spiritual path among women of the Roman Catholic Church (Atabong 2000). With the coming of the economic crisis, the association has included the alleviation of poverty among members as another objective and this has enabled it to engage in profit making ventures. It reduces poverty by providing and promoting education and training for the social and economic welfare of women.

The women have adopted two methods to alleviate poverty among members. One is embarking on joint economic ventures, which enable branches to carry out income-generating projects. Profits from the projects are used to assist the members who are in difficulties and to carry out charitable works among the poor and needy of the society. In the Buea Diocese, the Bishop has introduced a loan scheme, which enables various groups to obtain interest-free loans from the coffers of the diocese for any project of their choice. Repayment of a loan begins after twelve months (Barr 2003). To enhance the functioning of this scheme, the Bishop selected from each Division of his diocese a CWA animator. The women selected were sent to the Buea regional Pan-African Institute for Development (PAID) West Africa to undergo training on project management. The animator evaluates a proposed project and makes her recommendation to the Bishop and if it is accepted for funding, she monitors it to make sure the objectives are met. Some of the projects, which the groups in Fako Division of the Buea diocese have carried out within the last three years, include corn and cassava grinding mills, purchase of chairs and canopies for hiring, pigs and tomato farms and selling of palm oil (See Fako Division project animator reports from 2001-2003). All these and many other projects have generated income for the various branches.

The other method is inviting experts to teach the women different income-generating skills so that they could be self-supporting. In the last three years, the project animator for Fako Division has been organising seminars, which have taught the women basic skills in the making of milk, doughnut and powder from Soya bean, washing, medicated and powder soaps, pepper in oil, tomato paste, body lotions, fish/meat pie/roll, fruit juice and wine, birthday and graduation cakes, dyeing and stitching of cloths, designing and cutting of envelopes, cough syrup and baking using local methods (locally called *three-stone fire side*) (also see the above reports). Some of the women who have benefited from these seminars could actually be seen selling some of the items they have made on Sundays in church and in other church gatherings.

The third method, which was recently adopted by the authorities of the church to alleviate poverty, was the reinvigoration of the service of charity (*caritas*). In the Episcopal Conference of the Bishops of Cameroon, which held in Ngaoundere in January 2004, the prelates decided to institute a special Lenten collection in all its parishes. In a pastoral letter issued after the conference, the Bishops urged each Christian to put in a small amount each month or when he wishes and is able. Though not compulsory, the Bishops in the letter have used various biblical citations, which appeal to the conscience of every member on the necessity to make this gift. *Caritas* is meant to support the poor, the jobless young ones who have no parents, the destitute and the aged who are confined to their homes. Any amount collected by each parish is channelled to the national body, which on its part shares it out in the following manner; 25 percent for parish *caritas*, 50 percent for diocesan *caritas* and 25 percent for national *caritas*. The Bishops in their letter pointed out that *caritas* is a traditional Christian practice, which the church had neglected and therefore has now seen the need to reinvigorate it (Cameroon Panorama No. 557 of March 2004). What must have motivated the Bishops to do this was the increasing poverty among some members as a result of the economic crisis.

Before the bishops could reinvigorate *caritas*, the Bishop of the Kumbo Diocese had, since the late eighties, created a *caritas* organ of his diocese known as the 'Diocesan Social Welfare Committee'. However this committee remained very weak and little was known of its activities but in July 1994, the bishop decided to make it stronger and functional by converting it into a department called the Social Welfare Department of the diocese. He then appointed new officials (secretary, accountant, coordinator, animator) to manage it.

It is obvious that the state of the country's economy at the time the bishop of Kumbo nursed the organ could have contributed to its weakness. The economic crisis was just in its beginning and the poverty level was still very low as compared to 1994 when the Bishop decided to make it stronger. This implies that the number of people that could have needed the assistance of the committee was minimal. The 1990s was the period the economic crisis was at its peak and the poverty level was higher. This period started with the inability of the government to pay civil servants for two months (September and October 1990). Shortly after that salaries were slashed by 50 percent twice and the devaluation of the CFA in 1994 further aggravated *poverty*. The private sector is not very strong in Cameroon and many people rely on the civil service for a living and consequently when this sector is paralysed, many families suffer. That is why this period was particularly very rough for many Cameroonians. This leaves no doubt in one's mind on why the Bishop of Kumbo had to make the organ stronger and more functional.

In an interview with the secretary of the department he argued that:

It is the duty of the church to take into consideration the life problems, suffering, joy and pain of every woman and man so that mankind should be liberated. The social pastoral care is out to let mankind live witness to the gospel thus the exercise of charity by all women and men to all women and men. It is also the witnessing of God's love for all so that by action of solidarity, sharing of justice and love, God's love can easily be felt by each and everyone.

The secretary revealed the following as objectives of the department:

Sensitisation and organization of communities in community charity and development, identifying community needs, problems and solutions with the community, organising artisan and home training programs in various communities, which could enable beneficiaries to earn a living, raising funds or seeking funding for development projects in various communities, and executes, follow-up and evaluates projects.

Given that the effects of the economic crisis cannot be uniformed on all members (majority living below the poverty level, a few on the margin and others living far above the poverty level), the church must have reinvigorated the service of charity (caritas) as a means of redistributing income among members.

### *Full Gospel Mission*

Pentecostal groups in some countries carry out challenges and criticisms of governments and their unpopular policies that inflict sufferings on the masses. For instance, the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) through its President in 1998 decried the deplorable state of the Nigerian economy and called for a probe of the accounts of those believed to have looted public funds. Following the death of President Sani Abacha in 1998, the association regretted the shocking revelations emerging about how the national treasury was massively looted during his administration and the preceding Ibrahim Babangida administration. They therefore reiterated their call on the Federal Military Government of Abdulsalam Abubakar to make public pronouncements on the fraud allegations that were making waves in the media and should the allegation be in the affirmative, then the government should institute fearless probe panels to investigate and bring to book all that are actually involved and found guilty of plundering the national treasury (Afe, A 1999).

Unlike these groups, Full Gospel Mission Cameroon eschews liberation theology<sup>14</sup> and consequently, it attributes the crisis less to political mismanagement. Unlike the PCC and RCC, it has never come out with a position on any burning political issue because it fears it may be interpreted as the church indulging in politics. This church attributes the crisis more to the refusal of a

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<sup>14</sup> Liberation theology calls for the church to combine preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments with a deep commitment to social justice. By this the church should announce in words and action an integral form of salvation, or liberation, from all manifestation of sin, and not merely offer individuals the means of personal salvation through the sacraments.



majority of Cameroonians to 'accept Jesus Christ as their saviour' or become 'born-again',<sup>15</sup> the result being God's sanction in form of economic difficulties. This implies that when an individual truly becomes 'born-again', God solves his problems or guides him through all his endeavours. It could take the form of success in business because, as a 'born-again' Christian, he knows what to do in order to succeed in business. As a church which strongly believes in the 'born-again' doctrine, it keeps on pleading to God to act and has also been appealing to individuals to become 'born-again' so as to come out of the economic difficulties. In addition, the church has in the last decade embraced accumulation as another solution to the crisis. In its beginning, it adopted an ascetic doctrine which did not give room for accumulation but with the coming of the economic crisis, it has, to a large extent, also embraced a gospel of prosperity, which has cleared the way for members and the church itself to accumulate (Akoko 2002, 2004).<sup>16</sup>

As I have argued elsewhere, one of the reasons for this shift in doctrine has been the economic crisis affecting Cameroon. The Mission did not likely embrace the gospel of prosperity, because the economy of Cameroon was in a boom. Just like the other churches, it was rich because members were able to make substantial financial contributions for running the church. In addition, many sources of funding from Western Missionary bodies were available to various churches as compared to what operates at this moment. These enabled churches to carry out their activities successfully. In addition to these sources, the mainline churches in Cameroon engaged in business ventures in order to raise additional money for their activities. They engaged in business ventures in the areas of education, health, printing, agriculture etc. Like the other Pentecostal churches, Full Gospel Mission, avoided to operate businesses as an additional source of income for its activities. The reason was simply because of its ascetic doctrine, which did not provide for accumulation. However, there was pressure on the church authorities from the state government and even some of its members for the church to engage in the provision of social services, which were being provided by the mainline churches. For long, the leaders of the church had resisted this because they believed it was going to be an impediment for church growth. In line with this, members were not encouraged to go into business ventures because the authorities feared that they could fall into the 'temptations of materialism' and that could have a negative impact on faith and the church as a whole.<sup>17</sup> While Full Gospel Mission was resisting the provision of social

<sup>15</sup> To be 'Born-again' is derived from the cornerstone of Christianity which requires every individual to repent and 'give' his life to Christ.

<sup>16</sup> See, Knorr, W Full Gospel Mission Cameroon: What does the bible say? Our Position on Prosperity.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Nwancha, E (2001) 'Our Social and Educational Involvement', in: Knorr (ed) Full Gospel Mission on its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Gospel Press, Bamenda, P.54-58.

services, the mainline churches had long been involved in the provision of such services, most especially in the areas of health and education.<sup>18</sup> Though considered as social services, these institutions were and are still big sources of income to the central bodies of the churches. Institutions managed by the church were highly valued by the public compared to those managed by the state for what was qualified as better services and the result was a consistently high demand for the services. These provided much income to churches and some still make it now. Moreover, state policy of subsidizing schools and hospitals in form of free custom duty for imported drugs went further to swell the amount.

It could be argued that the availability of various sources of funding to Full Gospel Mission, contributed to its adopting an ascetic doctrine from the onset as opposed to the gospel of prosperity. With the economic crisis, contributions from members and external financial support have dropped drastically and for it to survive, the alternative has been to embrace the gospel of prosperity, which could help to raise the income level of members and the church.

The gospel, as practised nowadays, takes the form of not removing members or the church as a body from the avenues of accumulation. From my observation, this has had a tremendous impact on members in that it has re-oriented their economic lifestyles from asceticism to accumulation. There are no restrictions on dressing, nor is wealth seen as ungodly; on the contrary, fine clothes, nice cars, foreign goods are common currency. Members could be seen engaging in various businesses. The pastors themselves foster this image through their lifestyle.

On the part of the church, it has within the last decade followed the path of the mainline churches in providing income-generating services in the areas of education, health, and printing.

The church runs six nursery and primary schools and according to the Education Secretary, there are prospects of opening more schools in many other towns in the country in the nearest future. It has a Bilingual Teacher Training College in Mbengwi, a Technical College in Muyuka, and a Secondary School in Bamenda (Nwancha 2001).

In the area of health, it runs health centres in Garoua and Yaounde, which according to the Secretary of the Medical Department, would be upgraded to hospitals soon. It has two other health centres in Mbakeng and Banteng (Shu 2001).

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<sup>18</sup> See, for examples, Chiabi, E. (1997) 'The making of modern Cameroon. A history of sub state, nationalism and desperate unions, 1914-1961', University press of America, New York. Keller, W. (1969) 'The history of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon', Presbook, Limbe, P. 65-73 and 101-102. Kubuo, J. (2000) 'An overview of the Buea Diocese, 1890-1990', in: Njeuma, M (ed) *Pilgrimage of faith, (a history of the Buea Diocese)*, Copy technology, Bamenda, P.11-51. Weber, C. W. (1993), 'International influences and Baptist Missions in West Cameroon: German-American Missionary endeavor under international mandates and British colonialism', E.J. Brill, Leiden. P. 87-133

In Bamenda, it has a Printing Press (Gospel Press), which went into operation in 1986, with the intention of printing exclusively gospel materials distributed free of charge or at moderate prices. But with the crisis, the technical manager of the press revealed to me that they now print work on commercial basis.

It owns five Christian Literature Centres in Bamenda, Muyuka, Yaounde, Douala and Kumba. Each contains Christian literature including audio and videocassettes, calendars, diaries, stickers, T-shirts, key holders and almanacs for sale.

I made case studies of some of the enterprises run by members of Full Gospel Mission and the Mission itself. Those studied have been classified into three groups and presented below: Partnerships, sole proprietors and Mission institutions.

Of the partnership businesses studied, two have been presented because they revealed certain striking differences in their quest to accumulate. These are the Christian Communication Network (CCN) and the Zion Credit Financing (ZCF). While the CCN is aimed at evangelising and minimising profits from its activities, ZCF is a Commercial bank, which, like others, aims at maximising profits.

Frontliners Beauty Center is chosen to represent a sole proprietor business. What is interesting about this business is that it reveals a contrary picture of what the public thinks about the Pentecostals vis á vis beauty and fashion. The popular perception is that Pentecostals eschew beauty and are not also interested in whatever is worn in the name of fashion. Frontliners Beauty Centre, does not only negate this notion but it stands out as a place that, according to its proprietor, encourages fashion, beauty and even knows better what is fashion and beauty and how these can be achieved.

Full Gospel Technical College (FGTC) is chosen to represent Mission enterprises. This school is unique from the other institutions in that it is the oldest business institution of the church. It is also the most established, with a campus constructed by the mission to suit the purpose for which it was created. Most other schools are still hanging on temporal premises.

#### *The Christian Communication Network*

The Christian Communication Network (CCN) is a registered inter-denominational and apolitical Christian Ministry with its headquarters in Buea, South West Province, Cameroon. The idea of creating CCN was conceived in 1992 by Pastor Tembi Alfred of Full Gospel Mission, Cameroon. It was officially registered in November 1999, with registration number 56/G37/D14/1/Vol 111/OAPP of 5 November 1999, and was launched in December 2001. According to Pastor Tembi,

CCN is a Christian Ministry working for the unique purpose of building the Christian church into a meaningful community of dedicated disciples of Jesus Christ.

Though a Ministry, CCN is wholly financed and managed by Pastor Tembi who holds the post of Director General. According to Pastor Tembi, the objectives of CCN are:

To use modern methods of communication (Radio, T.V., Internet, and print media) to reach 'lost souls' for Jesus Christ and edify the Christian community. Through these, the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and repentance would be taken out of the walls of the church building into homes, streets, vehicles, schools, etc, where many 'sinners' are found.

To unite Christian churches so that together, they can effectively carry out evangelisation.

To preach the word of God undistorted.

Coming out with the 'long awaited' revival in Cameroon.

Training and equipping 'believers' to carry out the commission of evangelising the world.

Providing Christian counselling and orientation to students and others where and when ever the need arises.

To teach 'believers' how to use local resources at their disposal to combat poverty and diseases.

Running home fellowship cells in various neighbourhoods of Buea in order to nurture the newly converted 'believers'.

To organize crusades, symposia, seminars and conferences on God's work.

In order to achieve these objectives, CCN now runs a 1500 watts-transmitter Christian radio station (Revival Gospel Radio) in Buea on FM 106.5. The station was officially registered on 15 February 2002 and started broadcast on 5 September 2002. It covers a distance of about 1500 square kilometres. The Gospel is aired from the station in English, French, Pidgin and some national languages. This is aimed at reaching every person, the Anglophones, Francophones, literates and illiterates. CCN Revival Radio Station is actually one of the only two radio stations of the kind in Cameroon, which are involved in spreading Christianity. There is another one in Bamenda, (Christian Gospel Radio) which is older (it started in 2000) but works closely with Revival Gospel Radio station. They work together in exchange and design of programs and staff development. The Revival Gospel Radio station stands to benefit more from its relationship with the Christian Gospel Radio Station, which is much older and more established. In the CCN newsletter of January 2003, Pastor Tembi has highlighted the impact of the radio on the society since it went on the air in the following quotation:

Souls are being saved, lives transformed, witches and wizards converted. The secretary general of all the witches and traditional Doctors in Fako Division surrendered his life to Jesus Christ on 1 January this year. There is a general awareness of God in town. The single word in town for this is 'revival'. The number is increasing to an extent that we have been forced to move out of the house in which we were holding our home fellowship into a bigger one for lack of space. The hall had become so small that we needed to split and have other cells. We now even lack leaders to take care of this increasing number.

It publishes a bi-monthly newspaper (*Revival Impact*). The paper carries Christian news, messages, testimonies and adverts. It also covers health and educative matters. The first edition of the paper was published in March 2002. According to Pastor Tembi, many readers were blessed and others saved after reading the paper. Prominent among those who, he claimed, 'believed' and 'repented' after going through it, was a female student of the University of Buea.

It runs a Christian public library and coffee house in Buea with the intention of extending to other towns. Christian literature, audio and videocassettes and books could be borrowed from the library or read on the spot with coffee served.

CCN runs a training program, which equips its trainees with adequate tools for evangelism, leadership and missionary activity. This program has trained and equipped some fifty two street evangelists drawn from 16 different Pentecostal churches and these products are effectively carrying out evangelism in various towns in the South West Province of Cameroon.

It carries out adequate media coverage of Christian activities such as weddings conferences, symposia, retreats, crusades, seminars and conventions.

It also helps to organize crusades and plant churches for various Missions. CCN also helps to write and broadcast radio announcements for people. CCN further intends to carry out the following when the means become available:

Operate Internet and computer services. The Internet service would be used to gather information, particularly Christian news, for the Revival Gospel Radio and the *Revival Impact* newspaper, while the computer service would provide secretariat duties for the Ministry and any member of the public who wishes to use its services on commercial basis.

Be involved in missionary works within and out of Cameroon through the giving of accurate information to Missionary organisations after in-depth research on possible missionary areas and to facilitate the coming in of short-term Missionaries or volunteers.

Open an interdenominational Gospel Centre in Buea for fellowship, teaching and training on the gospel of God. This centre would also serve as a venue for Christian activities such as weddings and conferences.

CCN is still in its infancy and its greatest challenges stem from infrastructure and financial difficulties. Though it has started carrying out some of its intended activities, most of them are not functioning well because of these problems. It occupies a three-room rented apartment, which is used for all its activities-offices, library, radio studio, display and sale of video and audiocassettes etc. This space is so small for it to actually function well. It needs a building of its own which is designed to suit its objectives. Pastor Tembi alone cannot provide the necessary funds to put up such a structure and run the Ministry. One of his objectives was to make CCN self-sustaining and to be able to make some minimal profits out of it. Some of the activities, such as video coverage of events,

advertises on radio and newspaper, sale of newspaper, radio announcements, training program, recording and sale of video and audio cassettes were intended to be income generating. This objective is yet to be met because much initial capital is needed to invest into these before profits can begin to flow. Money is needed for items such as good video cameras, video or film projector, publishing the newspaper, equipment for the radio station, accommodation, taxes to the state and staff wages. As a result of financial difficulties, only one edition of *Revival Impact* has been published since it was launched. For this reason, income that was envisaged, to be raised through the newspaper cannot be realized. Pastor Tembi gives priority to the radio station and as such, all his resources are directed towards its success. If he has to continue publishing the newspaper, it entails diverting the limited resources meant for the success of the Radio Station. He is a pastor and a media professional and seems to have realized that the radio station would have a greater impact on the society than the newspaper and also that it would contribute more to the success of the Ministry and it can also bring in more income than the newspaper. What he is doing now is gradual investment, with the hope that some profits would start accruing later. Though a Christian Ministry, CCN too is a business venture because most of its activities are carried out on commercial basis.

Pastor Tembi in the newsletter of January 2003 has highlighted the challenges and difficulties, which CCN is facing. These include:

Meeting the spiritual needs of the 'hungry souls', counselling and following up the many listeners who come to his office after listening to messages over Revival Gospel Radio.

Giving its listeners the best programs and covering the entire area it has been licensed to cover. Covering the entire area entails raising the height of the antenna from 14.5m to the required height of 30m. It has difficulties in raising the required amount of money to buy the necessary equipment and hiring a technician to raise it up.

It is also facing difficulty to pay an accrued debt of 2 million CFA as balance for the purchase of the radio transmitter.

With the frequent cuts in electricity power in Cameroon, CCN cannot function properly because it has no standby generator. One of its greatest challenges now is to acquire a standby generator so that it can function at all time even if power supplied by the National Electricity Cooperation fails. At least 500 thousand CFA is needed to acquire a generator, which can solve this problem but Pastor Tembi cannot raise this money. Despite these problems, Pastor Tembi strongly believes that since that the creation of CCN was *a vision from God*, there is bound to be challenges emanating from the 'devil'. He argues that *'since God is more powerful than the devil, the CCN will end up overcoming the challenges'*.

Worshipping God occupies a central place in the daily program of the workers of CCN. Worship is done for thirty minutes, three times a day (morning, mid-day, and afternoon) and every staff member is expected to be present. During this period, every activity, except the radio, which could be programmed to be on without a technician, would be halted with the windows and doors closed.

## Zion Credit Financing

Zion Credit Financing (ZCF) is a Christian financial and investment co-operative bank. Though it carries this attribute, Pentecostal Christians, most of them drawn from Full Gospel Mission, conceived its formation and it is exclusively owned and managed by Pentecostal members. This implies that to be a shareholder or to work with the bank, one must belong to a Pentecostal group. Though owned and managed by Pentecostal Christians, it accepts deposits from the general public as well as doing other bank transactions such as giving loans, paying salaries of state employers, transfer of money and exchange of currencies.

Some Pentecostal Christians in Buea conceived the formation of the bank in 1995 and it went into operation with a capital of 500 million CFA in 1997, through a state authorisation order number SW CO/28/97/112. Its motto is 'In God We Trust' (See its flyer). The head office of the bank was in Buea but later transferred to Bamenda. It has branches in Douala, Yaounde, Kumba, Limbe, Dschang, Tiko and Muyuka.

According to the Buea branch manager, ZCF is unique from other banks in that;

- a) *'It is a super modern savings and loan force to reckon with'.*
- b) *'It is the first miraculous Christian bank, which has opened its doors with new banking principles that have beaten the world's banking system'.* By new banking principle here, he meant the employees and shareholders are 'believers' or God fearing people who could be trusted when it comes to entrusting savings into their care.
- c) *'The creation of the bank was a vision from God designed to deliver His people from poverty'.*
- d) *'It is a bank that believes in accountability, credibility, and integrity as its passwords to prosperity'.*

The Zion Credit Financing operates five types of accounts:

### *A) The savings account*

This is an account which saving can be withdrawn with no notice. It yields an interest of 5 percent to 8 percent of total savings in a year to the client and owners of this account can obtain loans from the bank.

### *B) The deposit account*

In this account, customers' deposits are kept over a stipulated period of time (at least three months), before withdrawal can be made. This account generates an interest of 10 percent to 15 percent of total deposit per year.

### *C) Current accounts*

There are two types of this account:

- 1) The business current account.  
Here frequent deposits and withdrawals can be made by the client to meet up with their business demands. The client pays insignificant charges. This account offers the client an opportunity to get a loan or use the bank to sponsor their contracts and projects.
- 2) Salary cCurrent account.  
Clients operating this account receive their salaries through the bank and benefit from salary advances, overdrafts and loans. The targets here are civil servants because the Ministry of Finance pays state workers either through commercial banks or the treasury.

### *D) The development fund*

Here, deposits are made in preparation for a future project, attracting an interest rate of 8 percent to 10 percent of total deposit per year. This account targets development funds contributed by members of various localities for the development of their respective villages. The idea of coming out with this type of account must have been prompted by the frequent cases of embezzlement by local treasurers of development funds contributed by members of various localities for specified development projects.

### *E) The special account*

In this account, daily savings are made by the client to be withdrawn at the end of the month with negligible charges. The client does not need to go to the bank everyday to deposit money, rather an agent of the bank moves to him and collects the money on a daily basis. Agents are also despatched to local markets to collect deposits from clients after the day's sales. The targets here are business people (both small and big) involved in transactions, with money coming in on a daily basis, for instance, retail shop owners, bar owners, market women and men, including the middle men food stuff sellers (buyam-selam).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Buyam-Selams are a category of business people, who buy food crops from rural farmers to resell in urban areas.



It is interesting that the bank accepts deposits from everybody, irrespective of religion, tribe, class, occupation etc but discriminates with regards to who should be a shareholder. For various reasons, shares are accepted only from 'believers'. One of the reasons has to do with the degree of trust, as revealed to me by a shareholder. They strongly hold that 'unbelievers' are not God-fearing people and should not be trusted when dealing with finances. Since a staff or shareholder has access to financial records, it is unlikely for a 'believer' to manipulate figures in order to misappropriate money. Unfortunately, barely two years after its creation, one of the officials of the Buea branch, swindled a large sum of money from the bank and escaped abroad. This caused the bank to have serious financial difficulties. It could not pay out large sums of money to clients who needed it and gradually smaller amounts could not be paid as well. Many clients left the bank and some of the shareholders too withdrew their shares. The Bamenda branch (the most prosperous of all) later rescued the branch. Many workers of the branch were retrenched and a new management was put in place. This problem has affected the bank right up to this moment as it is barely surviving. It is because of this that the headquarters was moved to Bamenda. The problem raises a question on the Christian principles, which the authorities of the bank had stood for in the management of the bank. One of the principles is that '*the bank is backed by a highly efficient God-fearing management*' ('believers'). This implies that as 'believers', such misdeeds can never take place within the bank but it happened. This incidence reveals the difficulties of 'believers' to translate belief into practice. However, the manager of the Buea branch strongly holds that this act was the work of the devil. He argued thus:

The devil uses human beings to achieve his goals and that was exactly what he did to the Buea branch but with constant prayers and the power of God over the devil, the evil force was rooted out.

#### *Frontliners Beauty Center (daily bread enterprise)*

This is a business enterprise owned by Regina Egbe Shekinah (Secretary of the Molyko assembly of Full Gospel Mission). Its activities are in the areas of facial, nails and feet care, hairdressing and plaiting of hair.

Shekinah, who comes from Manyu Division, was born in Muea, where her parents live. She passed through Saker Baptist College, Limbe and read Political Science/History in the University of Buea. She graduated from the University of Buea in 1997 and immediately picked up a job with the Zion Financial Credit, Buea. Because of the crisis that rocked the bank, Shekinah resigned in 2001, with the intention of being self-employed. While working with the bank, she accumulated some money, which was used to start her beauty centre in

November 2001. She revealed the genesis of her interest in this line of business below:

As far back when I was a child, I always loved doing things concerning beauty such as plaiting and studied how to take care of one. In primary school, I used to do plaiting of hair. In Saker Baptist College, I was one of those who used to plait very well. I also did plaiting at home for money and this helped improved my skill. I did not do any formal training to acquire the skill. This has always been in me and I used to tell my friends that one day, I would have a place where they will come to beautify themselves. And now, I am doing it, so I thank God that He gave me this experience.

She also revealed, however, that she got some of the knowledge from reading books on beauty and fashion.

On why she decided to go into beauty business when most people believe that Pentecostals shun all acts of artificial beauty, she argued thus:

I know that these ‘unbelievers’ are making a mistake. God is a beautiful God. There is nothing in God that is in disorder. I believe that being with God, we need to keep our bodies clean. This does not imply ‘masking’ ourselves by trying to change our form or structure but just to take care of us. We have to take care of parts of our bodies such as legs, hands, hair and face. Most people do not have enough time to sit down and clean their toes, nails etc, which are the little things necessary for beauty.

Frontliners Beauty Center, like others in Molyko, is a female beauty salon. It is unique from others in the neighbourhood in that while others tend to focus only on hair care, it, in addition, takes care of body parts such as nails, face, legs and hands. Shekinah started the business with an investment capital of 500 thousand CFA. The salon occupies one room in a building at the University junction. She pays a monthly rent of 6 hundred CFA and an average of 1 thousand CFA every month for electricity. The salon is stocked with two hair dryers, upholstery chairs, tables, buckets, show cases for displaying the beauty products, towels, tape recorder/radio for playing gospel music to entertain customers etc. Most of her customers are female University students and Full Gospel Mission. She buys the products from Douala, where it is cheaper. However, customers are allowed to come along with their products, if they do not like those at the Centre or can have them cheaper elsewhere. For hairstyles, a poster showing various styles is displayed for the customer to make her choice, if she does not have any in mind. Her charges vary with the product used and the style. The more expensive the product, the higher the charge and also the more difficult and complicated a style, the higher the charge. If a customer comes along with her product, she pays only for the labour. However, her labour charge for hairdressing ranges from 5 hundred CFA, to 1 thousand CFA.

Like the CCN and ZCF, Frontliners Beauty Centre has encountered some problems.

The first is that she employed a hairdresser to be assisting her but the lady later left Buea. She employed a second lady who was not a ‘believer’ but the ‘unbeliever’ decided to leave because Shekinah was always talking to her about

the necessity of becoming a ‘believer’, which she did not like. She now works alone and she intends to train a ‘believer’, who will not only be specialised on hairdressing, as was the case with the previous employees, but would be able to perform the other services and also worship with her.

The second problem comes from some customers as she revealed to me:

As you know, some women are very complicated especially when it involves working on their hair. For example, a woman may poorly explain how her hair should be styled and if the work is not done to her taste, she will bring problems. Also if you do it the way she explained and it does not come out well probably because of her hair texture or kind of product she came along with, she will be unhappy. Some of them are usually impatient, making it impossible for one to actually do good work.

Shekinah bears the cost most of the time this happens. As a solution, she endeavours to take her time to do good work and she also insists on using only products she believes would suit the style requested by the customer.

Shekinah revealed that she is succeeding in her business and largely because when she was about to start it, she committed it to God. She further revealed that if serving a customer coincides with a church activity, she gives priority to the later. She argued that the spiritual life of someone is more important than any other thing else. She prefers working with, as well as training, only ‘believers’ so that they can worship God together in the same manner.

She revealed her two alternative ambitions in life to me. One is to further her education and the other is to expand on the business so as to be able to train young ‘believers’ to take care of themselves and others.

### *Full Gospel Technical College Muyuka*

Full Gospel Technical College (FGTC) is situated at Yoke, Muyuka in the South West province of Cameroon. The history of the college dates back to 1971, when it started as a Social Centre for Home Economics and Bible Training for girls. Girls were trained in subjects such as, House Craft, Mother and Child Care, Health Care and Christian Marriage (Nwancha 2001). In 1994, the Mission upgraded the Centre into a Technical College and in 1995, the Cameroon Ministry of National Education officially approved it. It admits both boys and girls, irrespective of denomination. According to the principal, the most important criterion for admission is moral rectitude. Some of the students live on campus while others live in town. For the 2002/2003 academic year, it had a total enrolment of 240 students, all of them living on campus and 24 full-time teaching staff, drawn from Full Gospel Mission.

It is a first cycle technical college, which prepares students for the General Certificate of Education, (GCE) ordinary level and the French Certificat d’Aptitude Professionel (CAP). According to the principal, the Mission intends to upgrade it to a Technical High School when the necessary facilities for such a

level have been put in place. It offers trade courses, which include Home economics, Wood Work, Building and Construction, Electricity, Accounting and Secretaryship.

The fees paid by each student are as follows:

Registration	2,000 CFA
Tuition	40,000 CFA
Parents/Teachers' Association (PTA)	10,000 CFA
Computer Studies	10,000 CFA
Practical lessons	20,000 CFA
Class examinations	2,000 CFA
Medical	5,000 CFA
Boarding	80,000 CFA
Uniforms:	
Boys	46,000 CFA
Girls	41,000 CFA

The total financial requirement for non-boarders is 136 thousand CFA for boys and 131 thousand CFA for girls. For the boarders, boys pay 216 thousand CFA and girls 211 thousand CFA. Book fee is not included because the students are given a book list, which they use in buying books from local bookshops. A cursory look at the above fees charged by the school reveals that it is the equivalence of what is charged in other mission colleges in the country.

The major source of income to the school is the school fees paid by the students. The money is used to pay the members of staff as well as the putting up some infrastructure. According to the principal, the school has never received any subvention from the state.

The school runs a very big farm on its campus where food crops such as plantains, cassava, yams, and vegetables are farmed to supplement foodstuff bought in the market for feeding the boarding students. Students do the farming and harvesting of the crops. It equally runs a small dispensary with the money raised from medical fee. The dispensary provides medical attention to the students but when an illness is critical that it cannot handle, the student is rushed to the government hospital at the expense of the parents or guardian.

Just like the other enterprises, the school is plagued with a number of problems:

The first is that many students do not pay their fees on time and some end the academic year owing so much money. Given that school fees is the only source of income to the school for now, problems, such as, late payment of staff, inability to acquire enough basic needs such as chalk, teachers' books, didactic materials, report card booklets and examination materials arise.

A second finance-related problem, which the principal revealed to me, is the rising cost of foodstuff in the local markets. Boarding fee is usually charged

based on how much money can be used to feed the student for the academic year. This is determined by the ruling prices of foodstuff in the local markets. When prices rise, particularly in the middle of the academic year, the school would have to bear the additional cost because the school/students contract on feeding does not provide for additional charges if it happens, just as it does not provide for refund of part of the fees, if prices of foodstuff fall. The decision taken by the administration of the school to go into food crop production was a strategy to overcome such eventualities.

A third problem has to do with the location of the school. Muyuka is a small town with a long history of many technical colleges. Before the creation of FGTC, there existed other technical colleges such as the Vocational College of Arts Science and Technology (VOCAST) and FESS Technical College, all lay private colleges, the Government Technical College (GTC) and the State Rural Artisan Training Centre. Though this conglomeration has the advantage that FGTC can hire part-time teachers from the schools or cooperates with them in practical teaching, the problem, which I believe outweighs this advantage is competition for admission. It is unarguable that the higher the number of students in a school, which aims at maximising profits, the higher the profits realised and vice versa. FGTC Muyuka faces a problem of low enrolment because it competes with the other colleges for candidates. Moreover, the GTC campus, which is less than a quarter of a kilometre from FGTC campus, trains students free of charge thereby, attracting more students. The result of this is that FGTC is unable to maximise the expected profits.

Such establishments of the church as well as those of members are of tremendous importance in alleviating poverty among some of its members because of the employment opportunities they provide as well as the training acquired to earn a living. Some political administrators have acknowledged this. For instance, during the 2004 convocation ceremony of the Teachers' Training College Mbengwi, the government administrator for Momo Division hailed the authority of the church for helping the government in alleviating poverty by giving Cameroonian youths the required education and skill to ease their employment in the highly competitive market (*The Herald Newspaper* of 17 April 2004).

Just like the Roman Catholic Church, Full Gospel Mission seems to be particularly concerned with poverty alleviation among women. Unlike the RCC, which does this through the CWA, FGM has a Women Ministry (a strong organ in the administrative organisation of the church) charged with organising the women and mobilising them to fight the crisis. According to its national coordinator, the main objective of this department is *to unite all women of Full Gospel Mission in a common effort to help spread the teachings of the church.*

Besides this, it aims at encouraging the women to lead a Christian life in their homes and at times teach them practical things which could help them to earn a living such as needlework and house craft (Kankeur 2001). The interest in empowering women economically could logically date back to the creation of the Social Centre for home economics in Muyuka in 1971.

Within some Assemblies, for instance Buea town, the women have, in collaboration with the Women Department, uplifted the economic conditions of the women despite the generally low income of many. In a seminar paper presented by one of the women of Buea town Assembly on 'Women in Poverty Alleviation', Kamara Mary, using a biblical quotation, starts by arguing that a virtuous woman uses her hands, head and talent to do great exploits for her family and through these she can become a blessing to her family and community. She reveals that the women of the assembly have adopted such qualities and are able to pay school fees for their children, solve health and social demands of the family. The Women Department of the church provides experts who teach the women of the Assembly various income generating skills with which they can raise income to alleviate poverty. They are taught how to make soap, neckties and dyeing, production and sale of palm oil, fish pies, body lotions, cakes, scotch eggs and mayonnaise (Kamara 2004). Unlike the CWA, the Women Department of Full Gospel Mission runs a thrift-and-loan scheme through which members, who have acquired any of these skills, can take a loan at very low interest rate to operate a business. This system does not only provide the women the necessary skills but also the capital to carryout business. What is important for the survival and success of such a scheme is putting in place a mechanism through which defaulting, for instance, inability to pay back the loan or interest and interstate death of a debtor, could be checked. According to Kamara, all the necessary security measures, such as having collateral, are taken into consideration before giving out a loan.

A beneficiary of the scheme is Helen who revealed in the extract below that life had become so difficult for her and her family because her retired husband has not been receiving his retirement benefits and she is unemployed.

After acquiring the skill in making soap a year ago, I borrowed ten thousand francs from a friend and bought the chemical for making soap, including palm oil for eleven thousand francs. I made both laundry and bathing soap, which was sold for twenty one thousand francs within five days and after subtracting my total expenditure, I had a profit of nine thousand francs. In addition, my household of nine was able to use some of the soap for a month, some thing that used to cost me not less than five thousand francs. Since then my family is being sustained in this business and I have not been buying soap again in my house. We are now able to take care of our children in school.

Another beneficiary who took a loan from the scheme and embarked on another business line is Mirabel. She took a loan of 50 thousand CFA, which she

paid back after eight months and embarked on the baking of cakes and making of scotch eggs. She lives in Soppo, Buea and scotch eggs and cake produced by her are placed in some business centres such as hotels, filling stations and school entrances for people to buy. On Saturdays, her daughter and cousin of about fourteen and thirteen years respectively, help her in carrying some of these things around to sell. Mirabel makes wedding and birthday cakes and it would appear she is very famous in Buea due to this business because within one hour that I was interviewing her, she had two phone calls, which were making requests for birthday cakes and another person who came herself to make arrangement for a wedding cake though it did not materialise because they could not arrive at an acceptable price.

She revealed to me that before she could acquire this skill to embark on this business, the financial situation of her family was not very good. Her husband is a cleaner in the University of Buea, with a meagre salary, which could not take care of the entire family of four children and a cousin living with them. Two of the children including the cousin are in secondary schools and the other two are in primary school. She revealed that she makes profit from the business, which helps in solving family problems and other social obligations. She could not reveal her actual profit because it varies with time. The peak seems to be when schools are on because students like eating these items and in the month of December when many weddings take place.

Another scheme adopted by women of the Buea town Assembly to raise money is organising afternoon classes for candidates intending to write public examinations. According to Kamara candidates for these classes pay and any profit made is used for the interest of the women. The money, which is kept in their bank account, is at the disposal of any member who wants to borrow part of it and when the need arises, some could be given to the church for any project.

## Conclusion

The discussion has indicated that the two churches have been affected by the economic crisis and each is working to rise above it. While the RCC education department has been highly affected by the crisis because of its long reliance on government subsidies, the FGM seems not to be experiencing this with its school because the authorities of the church took the decision to operate schools during the period of the economic crisis and in doing this, they took the necessary measures to avoid running into financial difficulties. Catholic Mission teachers find it difficult to accept their present working conditions when compared to the past and this has been a bone of contention between the authorities of the church and the teachers. Full Gospel Mission does not face this because the teachers

were recruited under terms, which they accepted. Moreover, most of them are young people who feel contented with whatever is given to them because of the high rate of unemployment.

In support of Nash that *'if a people are poor therefore the church is and must be a church of the poor'* (Nash 1984), the two churches are pre-occupied with reducing poverty among its members. Given that each is becoming self-financing, contributions from members make up a sizeable source of income. Unfortunately the crisis has handicapped many people in providing financial support to the churches and this accounts for why each church, in order to succeed, tries to alleviate poverty among its members. This has created a reciprocal relationship in which the church overcomes the crisis by alleviating poverty among members who in turn provide the necessary finances for running the church. The success of the church would therefore be determined by the ability and degree to which it reduces poverty among its members. The higher the number of members that are alleviated from poverty, the more the financial assistance provided to the church and vice-versa.

Providing employment to members in establishments (schools, hospitals etc) run by the church, is a method used to enable members have a source of income. While the PCC and other churches closed down schools because of the crisis, the RCC did not take this move in a bid to avoid creating unemployment. Alternatively more schools were opened (creating more employment opportunities) though salaries of serving teachers were slashed by fifty percent and the teachers have always been fighting for the situation to be adjusted. FGM on its part embarked on providing these services, which it had resisted to do before the crisis. These have provided employment opportunities to members of the church. One of the reasons, which I have argued elsewhere, as being a contributory factor to the rapid growth of the church in the last decade, is the decision to operate these services. The establishments are run on a trust basis, which makes it possible only to members of the church or those ready to be converted to have employment opportunities in any of them. Many people have been converted to the church because of this (Akoko 2002).

The two churches have shown special interest in alleviating poverty among women. It is very likely that one of the reasons behind this is to liberate women economically because it had been a tradition for women (especially the majority which do not have a regular source of income and are full-time house wives) to rely on their husbands' earnings. The intention here would not only be to empower the women financially but enable them assist their husbands in running the home since it is increasingly becoming difficult for one person to do so. Also, as argued by Kamara, mismanaging finances by some men, for instance, in excessive drinking of alcohol, running after women, playing lottery makes it



worthwhile for women to engage in income generating activities to meet up the financial obligations of their families, which this category of men are unable to do (Kamara 2004).

Both churches also believe that helping the needy is important during this period of the economic crisis. The reinvigoration of the service of charity by the Catholic Church is indicative of the interest the church has in helping the needy. Unlike the Catholic Church, which has institutionalised this service and prescribed the methods of raising its funds and how it is shared, FGM has not institutionalised charity but it has another means of taking care of needy members. When a member deserves assistance, a special appeal is launched during a worship service for members to make financial contributions, which is handed over to the person.

## “You must be born-again”: The pentecostalization of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon

Pentecostalism, whose origin is traced from the great awakening (called Holiness Movement) in the United States of America in the early 20th century, was marginally present in Africa by the middle of the century. But over the last two decades, the continent has experienced a phenomenal growth in the movement. It has tens of millions of followers across the continent and continues to grow at an astonishing rate. Several reasons have been advanced to justify the proliferation of the faith (Corten and Marshal 2001, Gifford 1992, 1994, 1998, Marshall 1992, Van Dijk 2000).

Though several strands of Pentecostal groups keep on proliferating in the continent, what unites them is their maintaining of the doctrinal tenets of early Pentecostalism which include the biblical emphasis on salvation and justification by faith, the doctrine of the second coming of Christ, the stress on spiritual healing, the doctrine of the baptism by the holy ghost, symbolised by speaking in tongues (glossolalia) expressed in the verse from the story of the Pentecost in the Acts of the apostles, *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance* (Acts 2: 4). Each of the groups speaks of a rebirth in Christ and imposes a radical conversion in the form of a ‘genuinely’ biblical baptism by immersion on the new faithful as a final stage of membership (Nichol 1966, Hollenweger 1972).

Spiritual revival occupies a central position in each of the groups and for this reason, they take it a task to warn all Christians against the spiritual dangers, which could undermine the Christian faith. They sometimes do this with so much

persuasion and this impact negatively on the mainline churches in that membership is continuously eroding in favour of Pentecostal groups. In Africa, some mainline churches have become aware of the influence of these churches but seem to wish, cautiously, to accommodate this sense of revival in the church. For instance, the Methodist and Roman Catholic Churches in Ghana are cautiously adopting some Pentecostal practices. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church, revival was first introduced in 1971 when a Holy Spirit Sister started a prayer group in Koforidua after returning from the USA. Another group was established in Accra in the same year, and a year later two medical Missionary Sisters, also from the USA began the movement in Kumasi, which became something of a centre for charismatic renewal. Today many parishes of the Catholic Church in Ghana have prayer groups in which healing is an important element, as indeed it is in many other churches in Ghana (Ter Haar 1994). In another study conducted in Ghana, Opokoye reveals that the African strongly believes in witchcraft, demons, ancestral curses or diseases and as such when afflicted by any of these, he looks for spiritual healing. He argues that every church finds it worthwhile to include spiritual healing on its program since failure to do so amounts to losing members to churches that include such activities, thus the continuous pentecostalization of Christianity in Africa (Opokoye, undated).

While this development is taking place within some mainline churches, others do not tolerate the changes within their own framework and whenever a member or priest tries to introduce Pentecostal practices, he runs into problems with the authorities of the church. For instance, in the Buea Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, one of its priests started a revival movement in his parish, which attracted many followers. When the Bishop realised that the movement, inspired by the expansion of Pentecostalism in the region, had adopted several Pentecostal practices, he banned it. This did not only bring serious tension between the group and the Bishop but also resurrected the allochthony-autochthony conflict in the region because the South westerners felt that the Bishop (of Northwest Province origin) had reacted that way because the founder of the group was of Southwest province origin.<sup>1</sup> This exemplifies a situation wherein the church authorities successfully suppressed a move to pentecostalize a church. In some cases it ends up either in some members defecting to Pentecostal groups where they believe they could have this spiritual fulfilment or a new Pentecostal church, led by the leader of the group, is founded in which they continue their activities. For instance, The Lord (Pentecostal) Church-Agbelengor of Ghana seceded from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC)

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<sup>1</sup> See Konings (2003) on, Religious Revival in the Roman Catholic Church and the Autochthony-Allochthony Conflict in Cameroon, in: *Africa* 73 (1).

when its founder, Samuel Amedzro, started a prayer group, which adopted Pentecostal elements within the EPC against the wish of the church authorities. Its leaders were excommunicated because they resisted. The leaders of the group reacted by founding the New Lord (Pentecost) Church (Meyer 1995).

The aim of this chapter is to examine the gradual process of pentecostalization, which is taking place in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC). The PCC case is of particular interest because this development is coming from below and the authorities of the church, which had from the beginning resisted it, are gradually giving in to the wish of the ordinary members. The chapter seeks to address why believers want to imitate Pentecostalism and why the church authorities, which had on successive attempts resisted this development, opened up to Pentecostal practices in its churches. Two earlier attempts were made by some of the leading figures of the church to introduce Pentecostal practices in the church but each met with strong resistance from its authorities. Each case ended up in the formation of a new Pentecostal church, with a bulk of adherents being converts from the PCC.

The PCC is the historical and constitutional successor to the original Basel Mission Church in Cameroon, established in 1886 as an external arm of the Evangelical Missionary Society of the Basel Mission in Switzerland, and it maintains the spiritual and theological continuity of that church (PCC Constitution). The church's antecedents go back to 1843 when the English Baptist Missionary Society started work in Fernando Po (now part of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea). Under Alfred Saker, the work expanded to Douala in 1845 and to Victoria (now Limbe) in 1858. From then on, the Mission expanded its activities to other coastal regions until 1887 when German missionaries took over the work following the colonization of Cameroon by Germany. The First World War disturbed the work of the Missionaries following the defeat of the Germans in the war. All missionaries of German origin were thrown out of Cameroon. The Basel Mission offered its field under French administration to another mission based in Paris and in 1925, it returned to British Cameroon with a majority of its missionaries being Swiss.

The intention of the Basel Mission was to eventually hand over the work to Cameroonians. On 13 November 1957 in Bali Northwest province, the management of the church was handed over to Cameroonians and the name was changed from Basel Mission Church to the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and its first synod of Cameroonians was constituted. Henceforth the church had to be taking all decisions concerning her life and work in Cameroon. However until 1968, the institutions (schools, hospitals, stations) of the church were still under the direct care of the Basel Mission. In November 1966, the education establishments were handed over to the church. In April 1968, the rest of the

institutions (Mission stations and hospitals) were transferred to the church (Dah 1990).

Membership of the church has been increasing, from about 53 thousand in 1957 to between 600 to 800 in 2003 (Nyansako-Ni-Nku 1990, Dah 2003, PCC church diary 2005). The church has four administrative structures. From top to bottom are The Synod, Presbyteries, Parishes and Congregations. It has a total of 21 Presbyteries, 358 Parishes and 1290 Congregations. It runs a number of institutions in the areas of health (1 Hanseniasis and rehabilitation centre, 3 general hospitals and 10 developed health centres), education (21 nursery schools, 116 primary schools and 16 secondary schools including a teachers' training college), rural development projects (2 rural agriculture training centres, a pottery centre, a woodwork centre and a craft centre) and a chain of bookshops (PCC church dairy 2005).

## Earlier controversial attempts at introducing Pentecostal practices in the PCC

Before looking at the current Pentecostal practices infiltrating the PCC, it is important to present the earlier attempts, which were resisted by the church authorities, to introduce these practices. There were two remarkable attempts that, after strong resistance from the authorities, each of the leaders, including his followers, quit the church to form a new one.

The first outstanding attempt dates back to 1976, when Zacharias Fomum introduced his 'Born-again' movement inside the congregation of the Djoungolo English-Speaking Parish of the *Eglise Presbyterienne Camerounaise*, which today is the Bastos Congregation of the PCC.<sup>2</sup> Fomum, a University Don and the son of a late PCC Minister, started the movement at a time he was a church elder of the congregation. He was a charismatic lay preacher, whose 'Born-again' message was simple and clear:

You must be 'Born-again', people of Djoungolo Church, for your sins are many; the wrath of God will befall you, there is not much time left', 'You sinners, you so call Christians, are you 'Born-again'? Come forward and receive Jesus Christ today in your life as your personal saviour (Buma Kor 1997, 8).

Fomum's message was appealing to many people and whenever he had a preaching assignment, attendance was usually very high. Fomum became widely solicited as an evangelist in whose crusades it was believed the sins of many were forgiven, illness cured and demons rebuked. His preaching and the crowd that he wielded gave him great recognition and he soon became a member of the

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<sup>2</sup> To be 'Born-again' is derived from the cornerstone of Christianity, which requires every individual to repent and 'give his life to Jesus Christ'.

PCC National Centre for Evangelism before becoming its president. Under Fomum, the centre started an interdenominational 'New Life for All' campaign, which he took total control of. The 'New Life for All' campaign organised prayer meetings, first in Fomum's home and with increasing attendance, prayer cells were organised in nearly all quarters in the city of Yaounde.

Fomum's crusade revolved around personal salvation, which was built on an on-the-spot rebirth or reception of Jesus Christ. He believed that his message must be heard and adhered to by everybody to avoid the wrath of God. Everybody who felt guilty and then decided to repent was expected to declare in public, either in the church or at a rally. As years passed Fomum's popularity grew not only among Christians of the PCC but also those of other denominations who attended prayer cells. Many people hailed Fomum as they came forward every Sunday in the church, prayer cells and at crusades to declare that they had repented and had 'given their lives' to Jesus Christ. Those who remained with the congregation grumbled every time the 'Born-again' Christians interrupted the service to declare how Jesus saves and heals and other testimonies.<sup>3</sup> It became then like a war in the PCC between those who had repented and those who were yet to or unwilling to do so. When these members who had 'repented' met with those who had not, they brandished themselves 'born-again', or the saved ones. They spoke eloquently and boastfully with supporting biblical passages that they had received Jesus Christ in their lives and all other people were 'sinners'. The Djoungolo church was then in confusion and at a point of breaking because of this split.

His movement extended to other congregations of the PCC and he and his followers could be seen preaching and organising crusades in these other churches. Members of the movement could easily be differentiated from others in that they could be seen actively involved in activities organised by Fomum and they also went about with their bibles ready to use passages from it to persuade others of the need to become 'Born-again'. I lived in Yaounde for three months in 1980 with a relation who was part of the movement and during this period, I attended some of their activities to please my host, whose desire was to convert me and especially for curiosity sake. My observation was that after official duty hours most of the rest of their time was used on the activities (for example, revival meetings, crusades, evangelism, all-night-prayers) of the group and when any of them did not succeed in persuading a relation to join them, they preferred to part with the person.

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<sup>3</sup> Making of testimony is a typical Pentecostal practice which a member, during a worship period, stands in front of the church or on the podium during a rally to publicly inform others of a good thing that God did for him. This could be recovering from a dangerous illness, passing an examination, or having financial assistance unexpectedly under difficult situations.

After watching Fomum's crusade with keen interest for long, the synod of the church felt that it was splitting the church rather than uniting it. It also felt suspicious that Fomum could have been using the PCC to build a large following with the intention of founding his own church because he had started rebaptising Presbyterian Christians by immersion as he told them that the PCC baptism practice of sprinkling water on the head of Christians could not save them. The church authorities became unhappy with Fomum and in a pastoral letter to all presbyteries of the church, they prohibited Fomum and his followers from taking part in the worship services of any congregation of the PCC. They called Fomum a traitor who had used the chances given him to preach in all congregations of the church to build a following with the intention of founding a church. However, the authorities left the door open to those followers of Fomum who wished to remain with the PCC and abide by the PCC practices. Fomum and many of his followers pulled out from the PCC and joined other Pentecostal churches, which readily accommodated his Pentecostal practices, most notably Full Gospel Mission Cameroon and Apostolic church. He himself joined Full Gospel Mission and spearheaded an evangelistic outreach from 1978 to 1985, which actually attracted many people to the church (Knorr, 2001). Fomum left Full Gospel Mission in 1985 and founded the Christian Missionary Fellowship International (CMFI).

Reverend Dr. Bame Bame Michael led the second major move in the pentecostalisation of the PCC from the late eighties to the nineties. Unlike the Fomum's crusade called 'Born-again', that of Bame was known as the 'revival' movement because Bame believed that 'revival' was lacking in the PCC and needed to be introduced. Like Fomum, Bame Bame's father was a Minister of the PCC and unlike Fomum, he is a trained clergy of the PCC. He was appointed parish pastor of Djoungolo in 1979, at a time the Fomum's 'Born-again' movement was still fresh in the minds of members of the congregation. When he took over the congregation, he had the herculean task of rebuilding faith in members of the congregation and also putting an end to further defection to Pentecostal churches. In several of his sermons he preached against Fomum and the 'dangers' of his movement. In one of such sermons, which I attended in September 1981, he pointed out that he and Fomum were mates in Cameroon Protestant College (CPC) Bali in the early 60s and that the Fomum he knew when they were CPC students was not different from the one he knew at the time of the sermon. This implied that Fomum's claim of being a 'Born-again' Christian or a changed person could not be justified.

Bame Bame, is credited for instilling strict discipline in the church and over the years, members of the congregation became used to formal and dignified order of worship, which no other congregation of the PCC could rival. He was a gifted preacher and knew the bible to his fingertips, thus making him a profound

pastor and scholar. His sermons were very deep and uplifting, and his lifestyle attested to his vocation. He was also a pastor of the national radio station and his Sunday morning radio sermons were highly listened to (Buma Kor, 1997). He equally used most of his sermons to challenge the lifestyle of some of the Christians of the congregation. For instance, he condemned not only through preaching but also in writing, members of the congregation who belonged to mystical groups such as the Rosicrucian order. He equally lambasted the political system and social injustices, which prevailed in Cameroon. Bame Bame's political stance and his open criticisms of social injustice gave him much fame and recognition to an extent that he became like the peoples' spokesman who was consulted by several and diverse dignitaries in Cameroon. The church was usually so full because people loved listening to his sermons. From this position of fame and strength, he was appointed the Dean of the Faculty of Protestant Theology Yaounde, which he served in this capacity for thirteen years. He handled this position cumulatively with that of the pastor of the Yaounde parish of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.

In the early 90s Bame Bame started a 'revival' movement in the church. He claimed that this 'new vision' for the PCC stemmed from a spiritual experience he and his wife underwent in a church in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1987-1988 where there were prayer-healing sessions, which were manifested by the power of the Holy Spirit. His movement, which later came to be called the 'Pilot Revival Prayer Group in Cameroon', soon spread to other Anglophone PCC congregations, where it attracted a substantial number of followers. Gradually the church authorities became more and more suspicious of the movement's teaching and liturgical practices, which appeared dangerously close to Pentecostalism (Buma Kor 1997, Konings 2003, Mungwa 1995).

Bame Bame's 'revival' doctrine called for every Christian to experience baptism of the Holy Spirit as a necessary step towards spiritual growth. This logically implied that the baptism by sprinkling of water on the head of the Christian practised by the PCC was not complete for spiritual growth, until a second, which is the Holy Spirit, takes place. This 'revival' movement was characterised by some practices which are clearly different from those of the PCC, most of them Pentecostal-like. For instance, spiritual possession and healing, exorcism, the practice of glossolalia and loud prayers said at the same time by all members, giving testimonies in church, singing, clapping and dancing many choruses in church and more 'Praise.....the Lord' 'A..m.e..n', 'halleluiahs', which are said after every chorus or during prayers were some of the typical Pentecostal practices which characterised the Bame Bame's 'revival' movement. Buma Kor (1997), reveals that what attracted people to the revival movement of Bame Bame was its claim of spiritual uplifting prayers. The prayers and worships



were said to be effective, liberating, personal and deeply spiritual while the PCC worship services are dry, methodical, uninspiring and especially not spiritual enough to their taste. It promised healing, liberation from demon possession and evil attacks and assurance of salvation, which are considered rare parts of Presbyterian worship pattern.

He was replaced in August 1990 by Reverend Elangwe Isaac but he still exerted much influence on the congregation because of his fame and the fact that he was based in Yaounde, qualified him to be a member of the congregation. As a clergy of the PCC, he could assist the new pastor in leading a worship service or in performing other church rituals. He used this influence to continue his 'revival' movement in the church.

The continuation of the movement after Elangwe took over brought in differences between the two pastors because Elangwe was not part of it. The Christians, who saw two pastors with conflicting approaches ministering the congregation, could notice the differences exhibited between the two of them. On several occasions, their sermons were addressed to each other knowingly or unknowingly. This led to a split among the Christians of the congregation between those who supported Bame Bame and others who supported Elangwe.

The split was a reflection of similar division within the Cameroonian public and between communities and regions. In Cameroon, ethnicity and tribalism have eaten deep into the fabric of the society that people tend to support political parties and other aspects of social arrangement in terms of what gains their ethnic group, community or region could derive from them. It does not matter to Cameroonians whether such support would be for general good or harm the other groups or ruin the nation. So long as his group is benefiting, it does not matter what effects this might have on other groups or the nation in general. Nyamnjoh (2005) reveals that ethnicity and tribalism intensified in Cameroon when the democratisation process intensified after 1990 and an outcome of this is that the press now has also tended to reflect ethnic division. Tribal or ethnic newspapers, which propagate the truth as known and acceptable to the tribe or ethnic group are commonplace. For instance, *Weekly Post* has committed itself to defending the interest of South westerners against the North westerners, *The Herald* and *The Post* for the interest of the Anglophones and *Le Messenger* for the Bamilekes and *Le Patriote* for the Beti ethnic group. With the opening up to multiparty politics, some newspapers have been created too to defend the interest of certain political parties. For instance, *Socialist Chronicle* for the Social Democratic Front (SDF) and *Le Patriote* and *Cameroon Tribune* for the ruling Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement (CPDM). This state of affairs seems to have received the blessing of the state in January 1996, with the adoption of a new constitution that promised state protection for minorities, the preservation of the

rights of indigenous populations, and the requirement that chairpersons of regional councils be indigenes (Nyamnjoh 2005).

In the case of Bastos congregation, the split was between North westerners and South westerners (a reflection of the Southwest/Northwest divide in Cameroon).<sup>4</sup> Indigenes of the Southwest Province in the congregation felt that the 'revival' movement, intensified by Bame Bame (a Northwest indigene) was designed to rob Elangwe (a Southwest indigene) of his legitimate right to lead one of the most prestigious congregations of the PCC. Consequently, they were inclined to be in Elangwe's camp against Bame Bame. Thus the elders of Southwest origin joined Elangwe in being the most vocal opponents of Bame Bame (Konings 2003, Masock 1998).

Though Elangwe was regarded as the pastor of the congregation, the weight of Bame Bame's presence made it difficult for him to establish his own authority. Hence each of them made every attempt to impress the church authorities on the running of the congregation. Just like the 'Born-again' affair, the 'revival' had divided the Christians into those who had 'received' the Holy Spirit and those who had not. Buma Kor (1997) puts aptly that the 'revivalists' at the Bastos congregation tended to see themselves at a superior state on the Christian ladder than those who were not with them and tried to dissociate themselves from these people.

When the church authorities, which had been following up the development in the church with keen interest, realised that the differences were degenerating, the Moderator of the PCC called up a meeting with Bame Bame to discuss the issue. It was concluded that a 'revival' service was to be held in the Bastos church on Sunday afternoons and that the Sunday morning worship services were not to be interrupted. Also the revival service was made optional to members of the congregation. Another compromise was that a bible study group with 'revival' tendencies, which usually met on Sunday morning before the main service, was to discontinue.

Despite the compromise, the 'revivalists' did not completely stop their activities in the main Sunday worship service. On several occasions, they had to interrupt the service in order to impose a practice of theirs such as testimony making, glossolalia or the revival choir standing up to sing without being called to do so. All these were regarded as a breach of the compromise and further severed relationship between the two pastors, members and non-members of the movement. Moreover, the 'revivalists' service had started duplicating some of

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<sup>4</sup> For more on the Southwest and Northwest/conflict, see for Example, Konings (2003) *Religious Revival in the Roman Catholic Church and the Autochthony-Allochthony conflict in Cameroon*, in: *Africa* 73 (1), Awasom (2001) *Autochthony and Citizenship in Postcolonial Africa: A critical perspective on Cameroon*. ASC Leiden seminar paper

the activities of the main service in its afternoon service, which it believed had not been done in the manner acceptable to it. For instance, dedication of children, solemnization of marriage, thanksgiving and other special prayers from Christians. Buma Kor (1997) reports that even some dedicated Elders of the PCC congregation preferred to take their babies for presentation in the 'revival' service than to the Sunday morning main service because they believed that the Holy Spirit is manifested more in the revival service. The 'revival' Christians had also started paying their tithes to the 'revival' and not to the congregation. They equally made their offerings and special collection to the revival and paid their nominal church contribution to the main congregation. The church authorities were not happy with the development. Moreover, like the 'Born-again' movement of Fomum, the 'revival' had extended to other congregations of the PCC. They saw the group as a church within a church and felt to put an end to it.

In his pastoral letter on the 'revival' problem addressed to all congregations and pastors on 12 January 1993, the then Moderator of the church expressed worry that, like the 'Born-again' movement, the 'revival' movement had degenerated into a 'questionable separatist group' in some of the congregations and parishes. In an apparent response to what he felt was an attack on his leadership of the 'revival' movement, Bame Bame addressed a letter, which he copied all Presbytery secretaries, pastors and Christians of the church, to the Moderator. He read a copy of his own counter letter in the Bastos Congregation immediately after that of the Moderator was read since he was the officiating pastor on that Sunday and had received his own copy of the Moderator's letter. In the letter he dismissed, most often with biblical support, some of the allegations made by the Moderator against the 'revival' movement. He argued that contrary to the Moderator's argument, the 'revival' would be a strong force to unite the church, if allowed to operate.

As the 'revivalists' persist with their activities, the Synod Committee of the church met in April 1994 and prepared some guidelines on what form revival should take in the PCC. The committee resolved that pastors, elders and other church leaders of the PCC, who were engaged in the revival movement of Bame Bame, should desist from the practice, latest December 31, 1995. It warned that if they failed to comply, they were to be terminated, in case of pastors, or relieved of their leadership positions in the case of others. If they continued, even after the above measures, they were to lose their membership in the PCC. This sanction also applied to ordinary Christians engaged in such revival practices, which by the standards of the authorities of the church were unacceptable in the PCC. Despite these threats, the 'revivalists' continued with their practices in the PCC. Some Pastors and Christians who were involved decided to come back to

the fold while others in the Bastos church, led by Bame Bame, defied all odds by determining to continue the fight.

After several attempts by the PCC leadership to strike a compromise were rebuffed by the group, the Synod Committee met in Kumba in April 1997 and took a final decision to ban the group. Bame Bame was transferred to teach in the seminary of the church in Kumba but he refused and instead resigned from the PCC to join the Mission of the Evangelical Church in Cameroon (MECC), which is of Korean origin.

In January 1999, Bame Bame and a handful of other Anglophones decided to found the English-speaking parish of the Missions of the Evangelical Church in Cameroon, which they named The Church of Patmos. A majority of the Christians of this church, which is pastored by Bame Bame, were members of the 'revival' movement in the Bastos congregation who left the PCC so as to continue their 'revival' activities undisturbed ([www.patmos.8m.net](http://www.patmos.8m.net)).

I met some of the actors of the Bastos crisis to get their views in retrospective of the situation.

One of them was Reverend Dr Moyo Joshua, (Lecturer at the PCC Theological Seminary Kumba). He was already an ordained minister of the PCC at the time and doing postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Protestant Theology Yaounde. Being in Yaounde and an ordained pastor he assisted the other pastors in officiating in the Bastos church. He revealed that he was very active in the 'revival' movement in its early stage because he believes revival is an integral part of Christianity but he later withdrew. He revealed that when Bame Bame conceived the idea, he called some of them to discuss it and they all bought it because they knew the importance of revival in a church. He gave three reasons why he withdrew from it.

The first is that the whole idea did not go through the right channel. As he argued, it was an issue that involved a church and for it to have started, it needed to have had the endorsement of the hierarchy of the church but unfortunately, the whole idea was conceived by Bame Bame, who tried to impose it on the congregation without passing through the hierarchy and when the hierarchy realized this and tried to call him for discussion, it ignited fire and even degenerated into personality conflicts. By personality conflicts he was referring to the disagreement that followed between Bame Bame and the church hierarchy in an attempt to resolve the problem.

The second reason is that as time went on, Bame Bame started introducing other elements in the movement, which he disagreed with. For instance, the use of 'holy water' during 'revival' services. He even questioned Bame Bame on the importance of the water in a PCC congregation and why it had to be administered only on 'revival' members, if it were that especially important but unable to have

a convincing response, that dampened his faith in the whole idea. Also Bame Bame's mode of dressing (barefooted, with a long white gown which is not PCC tradition) during 'revival' meetings on Sunday afternoons made him to question why Bame Bame was putting on the PCC clergy attire during the normal morning service and a different attire for the 'revival' service in the same sanctuary. As he put it:

This made me to question whether this same sanctuary was holier in the morning during the normal church service than in the afternoon 'revival' service' and also whether those who attended the normal church service were not holy enough to merit the kind of dressing.

The third reason was that all those who claimed, at certain points, to have been possessed by the Holy Spirit during 'revival' services were only women and the same group of women. This made him questioned why only women and the same group of women. As he argued, when the Holy Spirit descended on the early disciples on the day of Pentecost, it did not do so only on women. To him it was a plan to persuade people that the Holy Spirit operated more in the movement.

Though he withdrew from the movement, Reverend Moyo acknowledges that the 'revival' movement introduced by Bame Bame could be credited for intensifying prayer and Bible study in the congregation, which had never been the case.

Reverend Dr Elangwe (now Dean of the PCC Theological Seminary Kumba) was another actor that I contacted. Like Moyo, Elangwe reveals that he is not against revival because, as a church develops, it reforms itself (both in doctrines and practices) and revival is one of these aspects of practices reformation. This aspect deepens the spiritual life of the Christian as bible reading is intensified. But as concerns the Bastos 'revival' he equally argues that its divisive tendency was one of its major problems. He revealed that when he took over the congregation from Bame Bame, they worked closely, until when Bame Bame introduced the movements and he could not agree with certain forms of the worship. As colleagues he told me they never sat together to discuss about the 'revival' since Bame Bame was so convinced and firm with his ideas. The only met to talk about it in church session meetings and also whenever there was a meeting called up by the church authorities to resolve the problem.

Reverend Dr Bame Bame (now pastor of Church of Patmos and Dean of the Faculty of Evangelical Theology, Yaounde) was another person that I talked with. Even though Bame was accused of pentecostalizing the church, he argued that the accusations were based on prejudices and misunderstandings. While arguing that he did not need authorization from the hierarchy of the church before rescuing people who had spiritual problems he instead accused the church authorities for not willing to compromise. For, instance, he revealed that when the last commission set up by the church to resolve the problem met, it came out

with resolutions aimed at bringing a compromise which he signed but Reverend Elangwe, who was representing the PCC authorities, refused to sign. As he puts it when I asked why he never wanted a compromise with the church administration, he said:

I do not know what it means by compromise. If it means compromising by denying what I hold to be true and to be a genuine Christian experience and the PCC was against that, then it is right. There were certain practices in the revival which were considered non Presbyterian and when a commission was set up to study how we could come to a mode of understanding and co-existence, we were ready to give up some of the practices like not taking off your shoes which we did not impose but some Christians decided to take off their shoes during worship, signing of the cross which we did not consider that as inevitable but we see that even today many Presbyterian churches, at least during the passion week, sign themselves to the cross and the pastors use it when they bless homes. We were accused of exorcism, that is, deliverance praying for people who are possessed but there are many Presbyterians churches today, for instance, the Azire church in Mankon that are doing just what we were accused of. So there were accusations based on misunderstandings and prejudices in the minds of people but we did try to come to a compromise and when the last meeting took place and a document was written up by the commission and all of us were asked to sign, I signed and every member of the group except Reverend Elangwe who was sitting in for the church. I do not know who did not want to compromise, me or the pastor here representing the church?

Bame Bame revealed that he strongly believes in what he was teaching and preaching and that he even told the former moderator that what he was doing was in the interest of the church. He equally revealed that in a document, which he edited, the present Moderator said clearly that what he was teaching was in line with the Bible but it was not the practice of the PCC. Bame Bame argued that the Christians need to experience God and the healing power of the Holy Spirit in their lives and that he also told the former Moderator that he did not need permission allowing him to start praying for people who were suffering because it was part of his pastoral ministry to do so. He therefore argued that opposing him for what he was doing was like accusing him of a spiritual crime because Pentecostalism itself is an essential component of the Christian faith. He said he was ready to pay a price for it. As part of this price, he went for more than one year without a salary because the church authorities decided to suspend his salary. He blamed the church authorities for refusing to give him the opportunity (he made several requests for this) to explain himself to the Synod Committee, which he believed would have handled the issue reasonably. He equally revealed that being the son of a clergyman who served the PCC for over forty years, it was not an easy decision for him to quit the church but he had to because he could not continue to imprison his conscience.

It is however, noteworthy that this pentecostalization of a mainline church in Cameroon has not affected only the PCC. The Roman Catholic Church had a similar experience in its Bonjongo parish of the Buea Diocese in the second half of the 1990s (see Konings 2003). This revival movement in the Catholic Church,

popularly known as the Maranatha, was founded by Father Etienne Khumbah, the then parish priest of Bonjongo and simultaneously principal of Saint Paul's Higher Technical and Commercial College. Like the Pilot Revival movement in Bastos, the Maranatha degenerated into the Northwest/Southwest disagreement because Bishop Pius Awah of the Buea Diocese, who stood against it because of its Pentecostal tendencies which he believed were not in compliance with Roman Catholicism, was an indigene of the Northwest Province while Father Khumbah was an indigene of the Southwest Province. In an attempt at putting an end to the movement, the Bishop transferred Father Khumbah to Bishop Rogan College (the Minor Seminary in Buea) as a teacher and suspended the Maranatha movement but Father Etienne did not comply with the instructions of his Bishop. After fruitless persuasion by other priests of the diocese for Father Khumbah to obey his Bishop, the Bishop sanctioned Father Khumbah by placing him under canonical interdict. The Bishop's action was interpreted by Father Khumbah's supporters (mostly South Westerners) as being tribally motivated. To them, the sanction was so harsh because Father Khumbah was a South Westerner. Protest letters were written to the political administration and the Pope against the Bishop. Despite the protests, the Bishop succeeded in suppressing the movement and peace was restored in his diocese.

One point that can be underscored with this development on the pentecostalization of mainline churches is that it became intensified in the 1990s, at a time the democratic wind of change was blowing all over Africa. Cameroonians were clamouring for a multi-party system of governance for their country and other genuine democratic reforms after a long time of successive dictatorial rule since 1966. This clamour for change was not unconnected with the "wind of change" propelled by the Soviet Union's *Perestroika* and *Glasnot*, which crumbled the USSR and brought an end to the cold war. Taking the cue from other African countries, Cameroonians took note of the fall of dictators and one-party regimes through early presidential, legislative and local council elections, sovereign national conferences, national debates and or consultations, strikes actions and mass non-violent disobedience (Ngoh, 2004). It could therefore be argued that some Christians of two mainline churches in Anglophone Cameroon (the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian Churches) took the cue from this clamour for change in the political system to reject the dogmatic practices of their various churches by attempting to introduce Pentecostal practices. In other words, this culture of political awareness with a corresponding free expression might have awoken a consciousness of free expression in Christians who seized the opportunity to correct certain things which they believed were wrong with the churches. Elsewhere with the Cameroon Baptist Convention (the third largest mainline church in Anglophone

Cameroon after the RCC and PCC), there was another serious crisis which threatened dividing the church in the same period. This did not involve the introduction of Pentecostal practices but attacks on its leadership, which was being indicted by some Christians for mismanaging the church. The leaders were accused of being materialistic, rather than paying attention to the spiritual needs of the believers, rigging elections in favour of their supporters, consulting witchdoctors just to remain in power and influencing others, dishonest and corrupt (See Aseh, 2000). Like the democratic struggles, which faced resistance from the political authorities, some of the struggles for reforms in the various churches faced stiff resistance from the church authorities.

### The ongoing Pentecostal practices in the church

Being a church, which has many congregations with varying socio-geographical settings and with pastors of various professional levels, the propensities of the pentecostalization of the PCC varies with congregations. This article has used the Molyko congregation as a case study to analyse this development in the PCC. The Molyko congregation register for 2003 shows that this congregation has about one thousand five hundred members, making it one of the biggest PCC congregations. Because of its closeness to the headquarters of the PCC, some of its members are staff of the Synod office of the church. This congregation is chosen to represent the different tendencies within congregations of the church and therefore to reduce the risk of generalization of whatever conclusions the study may arrive at. It is here assumed that focusing on one congregation, however compelling the justification would reduce the risk of drawing conclusions not representative or typical of all the congregations of the PCC.

Molyko is a neighbourhood in Buea town. Within the last ten years, it has experienced an exponential growth in population and infrastructure development much more than the other neighbourhoods of the town because of the location of the University of Buea, created in 1993, in this quarter. A majority of its inhabitants are either staff of the University, students or business people. The neighbourhood, which counted just four churches (Presbyterian, Baptists, Roman Catholic and the lone Pentecostal church being Full Gospel Mission) when the University started, now counts more than fifteen Pentecostal groups, most of them coming in from Nigeria (University of Buea Anthropology Students survey 2003).

The Molyko congregation has been undergoing a gradual pentecostalization process over the past years. The pentecostalization issue in the Molyko congregation is however different from what happened in the Bastos congregation of the PCC and the Maranatha of the Buea diocese of the Catholic



church in that the former is facing no resistance from the PCC authorities because it is causing no division among the Christians.

This seems to be championed by the Christian Youth Fellowship (CYF) group of the congregation. Membership in this group is drawn from students of the various institutions in Molyko, including others who may be self-employed, unemployed, apprentices, or employees in some of the business centres in Buea. Though a group in a PCC congregation, it has embraced a lot of Pentecostal doctrines and practices, which they exhibit in church to the admiration of members of the congregation. Not only members of the Molyko church admire the group. It has also, through the doctrines and practices, succeeded to convert some members of other mainline churches to the Molyko congregation. Some of its members admit to be ‘born-again’ in the PCC. It should be noted that the Campus Crusade for Christ International (CCCI) (an international, nondenominational Christian organization that operates on some school campuses, though most of its members in Cameroon are drawn from Pentecostal groups, making it more pentecostal-like) has played a big part to make the group embrace Pentecostalism. In an interview with the president of the group, more than ninety percent of its members who belong to the University of Buea community are in the CCCI. According to him, these members have been very instrumental in introducing Pentecostal practices acquired from the CCCI into the CYF group. This has also been enhanced by the fact that more executive members and other influential people in the group are drawn from the University community and by virtue of their level of education, the rest (most of them with a lower level of education) see them as more knowledgeable and would go by whatever they tell them is good for the group. This implies that there are two categories of members in the group (the first category are those who know that they have nothing to offer in terms of the Pentecostal doctrines and practices being introduced and are prepared to strongly adhere and propagate what the second category, which is made up of CCCI members offers). Whichever category a member belongs to, it should be noted that each of them remains very steadfast to these Pentecostal doctrines and practices. In different interviews with some of them, members have various reasons for joining the group and each persons interviewed showed this steadfastness. Following are the profiles of three members of the group. (Ashu-Arrey, Doris and Caro). The three cases may be taken to represent the different levels of education of members of the groups and the two different categories of members. While Ashu-Arrey belongs to the offering category by level of his education, Doris and Caro fall in the receiving category.

### *Ashu-Arrey*

As one of those with a higher level of education in the group (University student) and a gifted person in singing and the bible, Ashu-Arrey belongs to the category, which offers. He, in particular, is like a model to others and he has played a great role in pushing the doctrines through. His influence is so felt in the group to the extent that he is among those the junior members would always look on for counselling and also when the group is involved in a competition, he is among those they rely on for success. He equally acts as one of the spoke men of the group when there is a conflict between the group and other groups or session of the church. His importance in the group has earned him the positions of secretary and president, which are the highest in the movement

About 27 years old, slim and tall, Ashu-Arrey comes from Manyu Division. He is a final year student in the University of Buea and the first child from a divorced family (father living in the UK and mother in Cameroon). Since the divorce of his parents, the education of Ashu-Arrey and his two younger sisters is being taken care of by his mother, who is involved in the buying of foodstuff from farmers in rural areas of Meme Division and selling them in Kumba town. The meagre profit made by his mother through this trade seems not very sufficient to keep the family going, as she needs to take care of his education and that of his two sisters in secondary schools in Kumba. This has made Ashu-Arrey unable to live the kind of rich life most students in the University of Buea live such as living in an expensive hostel, owning a cellular phone, TV set and Video player and expensive modern wears. He has on several occasions had financial difficulties in paying his rents, feeding and even buying textbooks, typing assignments or photocopying materials for his academic work. He revealed that it is thanks to some members of the CYF group and the congregation, who once in a while provide him financial assistance, which he uses to meet up with his financial necessities.

Before coming to Buea, Ashu-Arrey had been very active in the CYF movement while in Kumba with his mother. The base of his commitment to church movements and activities could be traced from his upbringing. His mother, who is a very committed Christian of the PCC, played a big part in instilling in him and his sisters the interest in church activities. She took them to church regularly when they were kids, encouraged them to go to church even in her absence, join church movements and taught them the bible including other things expected of a Christian at home. They would get up in the morning, read the bible, sing hymns and pray to God. On joining the Molyko CYF when he came to Buea, he was voted first as the secretary of the group and a year after, he became its president. He revealed that his popularity in the group stems from his commitment to its activities and the number of songs he composes for the group,

some of which have enabled it to win the first position in many presbytery CYF competitions. Because of his ingenuity in this, the Christian Women Fellowship (CWF) of the congregation has often invited him to teach them songs, which they too could use for their presbytery competitions. His leadership position in the group and his ingenuity in songs have made him a popular figure in the Molyko church. Ashu-Arrey joined the CCCI shortly after he had joined the CYF group of Molyko. He revealed that his membership in the CCCI transformed his life by bringing him closer to the Lord and being the President of the Molyko CYF group, he, including other members of the CYF group in the CCCI, felt they could share their experience with other CYF members. On what he felt was wrong with the group that needed to be changed, he revealed that:

A few years ago, the CYF group was made up of members who professed to be Christians. The social character of this group then was not appreciable and deviated from the expected norms of Christianity. The character and attitude of members was a disappointment to many who sought spiritual solace, renewal of life transformation. Youth in this group were involved in premarital sexual activities, unwanted pregnancies and abortion was the order of the day. Some church elders and other adults in the church found the group as fertile ground to obtain young and active sexual partners. The objective of the group, which is to build responsible youths, was hardly achieved as attention was diverted from spiritual to social activities. There was no interest in Bible study and prayers. It was common to find quarrels and battles among members. Some members, in search of spirituality, got attached to para-church organisations and Pentecostal groups. When those of us in the Molyko CYF group, who are in CCCI, shared our experiences in the CCCI with the CYF group, there was transformation of the lives of many members. In the CCCI, we observed that the objective of members is to transform society. The quality of their life is different from that of the CYF members. They express and portray a high sense of morality, life satisfaction and personal integrity. This is associated with the fact that they are born-again and that Christ had transformed them from their former way of life full of filth and indecency. They constantly go through training and seminars to help people know Christ and change. Those of us in the CYF who participate in this training and seminars use the knowledge to evangelise our friends back in the CYF one after another and helping the group grow spiritually. At the beginning, we found a lot of resistance but later on many members responded to the gospel and experienced life transformation. A majority have testified life transformation and change from their former ways and began praying and helping others to change. Most of us have become 'Born-again' and we could now testify spiritual enrichment. We have become more Pentecostal-inclined especially in music, prayer, evangelism, spiritual exorcism and behaviour to the dislike of some church elders who continue to fight us.

The above reveals that he totally embraces Pentecostal practices like in music, prayer, evangelism, exorcism and other behaviour. Ashu-Arrey sees nothing wrong in being a Presbyterian and at the same time 'Born-again'. He argued that every Christian is expected to be born-again, no matter the church, but regrettably the practices which qualify an individual to be born-again are usually attributed to Pentecostalism but absent among mainline Christians. He believed that the Pentecostal practices have made the group spiritually very powerful that no evil force can destroy it. He narrated an incident where a lady by name Brenda confessed having been sent to come and destroy the group but she failed because

the group was very strong spiritually. Brenda was ‘possessed by a marine spirit’ which instructed her to come and destroy the group because it prayed so much to the disturbance of the mermaid. The mermaid instructed Brenda to start by destroying Ashu-Arrey and Johnson (the most influential members) so that it could be easy for the entire group to be destroyed. Unfortunately the group was too spiritually powerful that Brenda did not succeed. Brenda confessed a lot of similar evil things she had undertaken with success. She also brought out evil protective things, which the group burnt and destroyed. After the confessions, Brenda decided to join the group and the CCCI and she is very dedicated in the two groups.

### *Doris*

Doris’ is a good example of those who, inspired by these practices in the CYF, have left other mainline churches to join the PCC. She gave up her membership in the Roman Catholic Church, despite the disapproval of her parents, to join the PCC. Her case justifies the argument that the other mainline churches are being affected by this development in that some of their members, who are attracted by the Pentecostal practices, convert to the PCC. She belongs to receiving category of the group.

Doris, about 25 years old light coloured and soft-spoken lady, hails from Oku in the Northwest province. Though from the Northwest province, she was born in one of the CDC camps in Tiko, Southwest province where her retired parents worked with the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC). Doris highest educational qualification is the GCE advanced level. On completing high school in 1996 in Buea but unable to have admission into the University of Buea because of low GCE grades, she decided to take some courses in computer studies. She used the computer knowledge to open a documentation centre (her main source of income) in the Molyko neighbourhood. The centre (in which she was interviewed) has two computers, a photocopy machine, scanner, binding machine and a variety of stationery for sale. In addition, she equally runs a mobile phone service (locally called ‘call box’) in the centre. She has one apprentice and another young lady who assists her in running the place. Doris seems to have carefully selected these lines of businesses in the Molyko neighbourhood because they are highly demanded by students and staff of the various institutions, particularly the University, in Buea.

She was brought up in the Roman Catholic Church but while in high school, she had two friends in the Molyko CYF group who persuaded her to convert to Presbyterianism. On conversion, she immediately joined the CYF movement. She argued that the Roman Catholic Church did not provide her the spiritual satisfaction she needed. The sermons were very dry, singing not lively and the

behaviour of many of the clergies did not reflect their vocation. Many clergies were involved in adulterous practices and materialism. Her decision to convert did not please her parents, (members of the Roman Catholic Church) because they felt she had not consulted them before doing so and they saw nothing wrong with the Catholic Church in which she grew up. Moreover, joining the CYF, which has much Pentecostal tendencies, was particularly displeasing because the Roman Catholic Church is the church most criticized by Pentecostals. This created some tension between Doris and her parents at the onset to the extent that they threatened not to give her any financial support but on realizing that no amount of threats or persuasion could make her come back to the Roman Catholic fold, her parents eventually gave in. Doris is the song leader of the group and she is often seen leading the group whenever it is called up to sing in church. Unlike Ashu-Arrey, Doris is not a member of the CCCI. She revealed that if she were to be a member of a school community where the CCCI operates, she would have joined the group because of the spiritual enrichment that it provides to an individual.

Doris revealed that her decision to join the CYF movement has so far been the best she has taken in her spiritual life. The group, she argued, has instilled love, happiness and other qualities worthy of a Christian in her, which is not the case with many Christians. Like Ashu-Arrey, she argued that those accusing them of introducing Pentecostal doctrines in the PCC are people who either do not read the bible or do so with no proper understanding. She believes that they (Molyko CYF) do a lot of bible study in the CYF as compared to other groups in the church, which gives them an advantage over others in matters of spirituality. She equally cited the good results they have been obtaining at every CYF competition as evidence of their firm grip of Christian doctrines and their ability to translate them practically. She was equally very pleased that the majority of members of the Molyko congregation have embraced the Pentecostal practices. She sounded very optimistic that in the nearest future the few who are accusing them of pentecostalizing the church would be among those at the forefront of the practices.

### *Caro*

Caro is among those members of the group who by their level of education, uncritically imbibe what their leaders tell them is good for the group. Like others of this category, she believes so much on the practices because her leaders teach her that it is the right path in Christianity.

A twin of about 23 years old, Caro comes from the Northwest province. She is short, dark and slim and appears very shy. Her elder brother who is a civil servant in Buea brought her to the Southwest province in 1988 to live with him in

order to sponsor her learn tailoring. She seemed to have been advised to learn tailoring because she was not bright at school. Her highest qualification is the First School Leaving Certificate, obtained in 1989 in her village. After completing primary education, she did not proceed to secondary school because she could not pass the Common Entrance Examination into that level. Her twin sister, who definitely must have been more brilliant in school, is a student in the University of Buea. Because of her low level of education, I had to interview her in Pidgin English.

Caro had joined the CYF in her native village before coming to Buea. She was brought up in a Presbyterian family where her father was and still is chairman of his local congregation while her mother was an elder of the congregation for a long time. There is no doubt that Caro's family background must have contributed much to her joining the CYF. She revealed that as Presbyterians and leaders in a congregation, her parents did all to enable every family member to be actively involved in church activities. For instance, reading bible lessons in church, cleaning the church and the yard, providing record of church attendance every Sunday, tuning songs in church etc. They made it obligatory for every family member to join the church group, which corresponded to his/her age.<sup>5</sup> Caro had been with the Young Presbyterian (YP) before crossing over to the CYF. She revealed that being active in church groups and other non-group activities has been part of her. Thanks to her parents who she said she will always remember them for the spiritual upbringing they provided them.

Caro did not join the Molyko CYF immediately she came to Buea though she was regular in church attendance. She did this some nine months after. On why she stayed for months before joining the Molyko group despite her deep interest in church groups, she said:

Time wey I been come Buea, I no be wan join the group immediately because I be wan for take my time see weda yi be dey like the one for my village. Another ting be say, Buea na place for big book and people like for tok na grama I know be wan join any group wey dey go de tok na grammar wey I no knoyam well or laugh me when I dey tok na pidgin English. I be tink say all people for dat group be commot na for university. Na after some time wey my broda ye woman been take me go for some ye CWF member ye house wey ye small sister been be member for the group wey me I be know say I fit join too. Dat girl get na first school like me. Since wey I be sabi dat girl me and ye don be na good friend and through ye, I been join the group.

From the above, it is unarguable that her level of education accounts for her reluctance to join the group immediately she arrived Buea. Being sceptical in

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<sup>5</sup> The PCC has instituted some church groups based on age range though the ranges are not specified. Each church member is encouraged to join the group which corresponds to his or her age. Beginning with the youngest, these groups are, the Young Presbyterian (YP), the Christian Youth Fellowship (CYF), and the last groups of same age range but with sex differentials, which are the Christian Women Fellowship (CWF) and the Christian Men Fellowship (CMF).

joining a group which she felt she was not going to be comfortable in when she came to Buea because of her level of education, she later realised that the group is opened to youths of all levels of education Caro is an ordinary member of the group. She is among those who, because of their level of education, have not contributed to the embracement of Pentecostal practices by the group but she has been made to believe so much on them. She now sees herself in a CYF group with practices different from what is obtained in her former group and she sees the later practices as being more religious than the former. She revealed that if she were to go back to the village, she would love to introduce them in her village group.

The Pentecostal practices, which are being introduced in the congregation, include singing and dancing, house-to-house evangelism, making of testimonies and spiritual healing. The following discussion highlights how each of these is put into practice.

On music, the PCC has an authorised hymnbook called *The Church Hymnary*. This book is also used in many Presbyterian Churches in the world, including South Africa, Australia, Wales, Ireland, New Zealand, and England. It is also used by The Church of Scotland and The United Free Church of Scotland (*The Church Hymnary*, Revised edition 1927). In Cameroon, the songs are translated into Mungaka and Duala (the two local languages that were intended to be used for evangelisation by early Basel Missionaries in Cameroon), for use in the rural areas, which are believed to better understand and sing the songs in the local languages because of high illiteracy. Songs in the book are meant for use during worship service and other occasions such as death and burial, birth, and marriage. The songs, which are so classical, are not sung with accompanied dancing and clapping of the hands. During every Sunday worship service, a number of songs could be sung from the book. However, individual choral groups in the church could at times sing to substitute some of the hymnal songs during the service. In the Molyko congregation, this standard hymnbook is little made use of in a worship service. Preference is given to Pentecostal choruses, most often led by the CYF group, to a point that when they are being sung everybody participates with much joy and they give up themselves to God. Dancing and clapping, which are other characteristics of Pentecostal music, usually accompany the singing but unlike the Pentecostals who use accompanied modern musical instruments, local instruments are used. During offering, they would sing, dance with various individuals showing their dancing styles, rise from their sitting positions and move forward in order to give their offering to God. Sometimes, the officiating minister would be compelled to stop the singing in order to continue with the next item in the liturgy because members always like to sing unabated.

The songs and dancing have also impacted on the life of the Christians out of the church realm. In their homes, cars and offices, most of them play much Pentecostal music either on audio or video players. Those who cannot afford to own music set tune to the Revival Gospel Radio Station in Molyko, which is specialised in playing this type of music. On various occasions such as deaths, births and marriage, organisers could be seen preferring to animate the occasion with this type of music and indeed an occasion that brings members of the church together is likely to fail if Pentecostal music is not played for people to dance.

The Molyko PCC has adopted house-to-house evangelism and making of testimonies, which are highly associated with Pentecostalism. House-to-house evangelism is assigning some members of the congregation to go round in the homes of non-members for evangelisation. Although house-to-house evangelism is in its program of activities, it is not very much put into practice because of lack of devoted members of the congregation who can carry it out. According to one of the elders of the congregation, the church session as a strategy to bring back to its fold backsliders and also to convert more people, because Molyko has become a competitive ground for religious activities, instituted it. Testimony making and arranging house-to-house evangelism take place only during the mid-week prayer period.<sup>6</sup> During the mid-week prayers meeting, the coordinator (either the pastor or a church elder) allocates a period for members to make testimonies of the good things God did to them. The testimonies made usually represent some of the different tendencies of social problems that are encountered by members of the congregations, which they believe God intervened. Below, are some of the testimonies, which I followed on different mid-week prayer sessions. Each may be taken to represent the different tendencies of social problems that could be found in the society.

### *Gladys*

“Joining a church group and prayer enabled her to conceive”

Child bearing is very important in African culture. It contributes greatly in stabilizing marriages. Childlessness is a social problem in African societies. Many marriages have broken because of childlessness and a childless couple will go all length to have a child. Gladys’ problem, which almost cost her her marriage, revolved around the need to have a child. She revealed in her testimony

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<sup>6</sup> Mid-week prayers take place every Wednesday in the church at 6 pm. The Pastor of the congregation instituted this less than three years ago, after consultations with the session. During this period, prayers, and testimonies are presented. Also during this meeting, house-to-house evangelism is discussed and people are selected to move from house to house for evangelism. According to the pastor’s report on the progress of the meeting to the congregational meeting of Sunday 08/08/04, the mid week prayer is moving successfully. He enjoined those who have not been attending to start doing so.



that God miraculously enabled her to have a child after a long time of difficulty in getting pregnant.

Gladys, in about her mid 30s, hails from the Northwest Province. She is an English Language teacher in one of the high schools in Molyko. She is an active member of the Christian Women Fellowship (CWF) group of the congregation and she holds the positions of Secretary of that group (probably because of her level of education and eloquence) and song mistress of the congregation. These positions make her to be popular in the congregation because she frequently tunes songs in church and goes on stage to speak on behalf of her group. On marriage she had difficulties in getting pregnant. Though she did not disclose when making the testimony, Gladys revealed to me later that this had started creating some friction between her and her in-Laws, who felt she could not provide a child for their son. The pregnancy to her was therefore like a turning point in her life because it assured her of a comfortable place in her matrimonial home. Her testimony was of particular interest to me because it revealed that members of the congregation, no matter the level, strongly believe that God is capable of solving desperate situations. The joy expressed by the audience after her narration was indicative that they believed God had actually provided a solution to the problem. Her testimony on how God listened to her prayer and made her to conceive was narrated with much joy:

When I got married, I stayed for about 4 years unable to conceive and as usual, people who were expecting me to do so were becoming worried. I went through medical checks and there was no problem and I then asked myself what really could be the problem. At a certain point, I became very disturbed myself considering the age of my husband and I was not growing younger either. On a faithful Friday, I got up and discovered that I was on my menses and I became more disturbed than ever. Later that day, I made up my mind to join the CWF. At about 5 pm that day I was in the church to attend the group's weekly meeting. On arrival in church, I sat down and prayed, I talked to God, I told God that he is the one who instituted marriage and according to him, a man and his wife will leave their parents and make their own home and bring forth children. I reminded him of what happened to Hannah in the Bible before she conceived Samuel. I challenged him by telling him that if he is the living God I am serving, then let me not have my menses again but conceive. By the time I finished praying, a bird sent its droppings on me. The following month, I became pregnant and nine months after I gave birth to my bouncing baby boy. I felt that the droppings of the bird at the time of my praying were God's positive response to my appeal. You will like to know that two months before I could join this church movement, I went to assist a friend in cooking food for her own dedication into the movement and while this was going on her son came to me and said 'Anti, I know those children living with you are not your children'. I argued with him but he insisted and told me that I cannot deceive him. He then said I should not bother because his mother will have twins and give me one of the children. At this the mother laughed and said he had earlier said so to her elder sister who had no child as well and a month later, she conceived. This made me to believe that the child had an ambassador of God sent to deliver me a message.

### *Akum*

“Evil spirit whisked off from his family”

Akum’s age could be estimated above 65 years. His own case is particularly interesting because it reveals a strong belief in witchcraft amongst the Christians, which they believe can be overridden by the Holy Spirit. Witchcraft, an evil force, which is believed to be very much around in Cameroonian society, is condemned in Christianity. Pentecostal Christians in particular, have relentlessly preached against this practice and they however hold that through the power of God, it could be exorcized in vicinity, a family or an individual that it has attacked. It also shows that members of the congregation of all ages do make testimonies and the nature of problem being testified usually revolves around age and societal values. For instance, while that of Gladys (a young lady) was to get a baby to consolidate her marriage, that of Akum (an aged man with a family to take care of) was to cleanse his family of an evil force. Akum claimed to have had the evil spirit whisked off his compound after prayers given by the pastor of his former congregation in Bamenda in 1983.

He narrated that before the pastor could whisk off the spirit, he usually had mysterious happenings and ill luck such as an owl crying every night in his compound, miscarriages of his children at marriage, others not doing well in school and frequent illness in the family. Before his death after a protracted illness, Akum’s father had advised him to immediately cleanse the compound and the family on his death but he did not do so. On several occasions, his father’s spirit reminded him in a vision of the need to do so but he resisted because his Christian faith does not permit such a thing. In spite of this, the evil spirit continued its work. Akum later believed that really there could be an evil force around him but would not consult a witch doctor for exorcism.

In the search for a solution to his problem, he, through the influence of other Christians who believed that there was an evil force around him, went and narrated his ordeal to the Pastor of his congregation. The pastor invited him and his family members to the church on a Friday afternoon and after going through certain passages in the Bible, he prayed and prayed rebuking the evil spirit troubling the family. As he was praying, something like a shaft of light seemed to occur in the church, which he believed was the power of God tearing the evil spirits apart. Since then, the mysterious happenings and ill luck surrounding his family disappeared. Akum holds strongly that God used the pastor to rescue his family from the evil hands.

## Rose

“Rescued from troublous situation”

Financial fraud is a practice, which can destroy someone’s integrity. Though it is a crime, which is punishable under Cameroon law, among Christians, it is worse because it is believed supernatural sanctions could as well take place. Any Christian who is wrongfully accused of this social ill would definitely be worried. Rose’s case is a situation of an error she made, which could have marred her Christian image but she believes that God intervened to rescue her.

Rose is a 26-year-old Medical Assistant in one of the private health clinics in Molyko. She is a graduate of the University of Buea and an active member of the Molyko PCC. Though she does not belong to any church group, she coordinates members of the church who do not belong to any group in raising money for any project when the need arises. If there is one woman who has recently learnt to be very careful in financial matters, she must be the one. Because of a little mistake, her job, her money and even her Christian integrity could have evaporated into thin air. But she thankfully testified that God rescued her from the ugly situation. Here is her story:

It was in January this year that as a Medical assistant overseeing certain financial matters at my work place, I mistakenly wrote 11.5 thousand CFA while trying to write 115 thousand CFA. I did this without detecting the error. While going through the records later, my boss discovered that more than 100 hundred CFA was missing and concluded that I had stolen the money. That is how I got myself entangled in a thick net of controversy. I was asked to pay the money I never stole.

Rose revealed that after much reflection, coupled with advice from friends, she resorted to divine intervention. She fasted for two days accompanied by prayers with appeal to God to intervene. After these, she believed a miracle was in the offing. On getting to the office, she was informed by her boss that the mistake had been discovered.

An examination of the three testimonies reveals that like Pentecostal testimonies, they mostly deal with instances where one was in a difficult or dangerous situation and through the miraculous intervention or love of the Lord, he came out of it victoriously.<sup>7</sup> It is true that in as much as one is able to come out of such situations, there are instances where one has fallen victim. These have hardly been brought up as testimonies. The intention of instituting testimony making is to convince members of the ‘reality’ of God. It is also to let ‘believers’ know that the Lord prevails over all evils and is always in control to protect his faithful followers. That is, teaching that God often sends miraculous signs together with his Revelations to help people accept his reality and

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Akoko (unpublished) *An overview of Full Gospel Mission Cameroon*, for a number of testimonies made by members of this church in the Molyko Assembly.

goodness. These miracles are taken to be supernatural phenomenon, transcending the natural order and yet can be recognized with our natural senses and intellect. Thus, they are signs or symptoms of a supernatural reality intervening in the natural world. That is, supernatural reality that becomes physically present in the natural world. This reality remains hidden as a mystery because it is believed that God demands faith from people but it should not surprise anyone that it sometimes manifests itself through miracles to help people accept the supernatural reality more easily. Thus these miracles revealed as testimonies are not just unusual phenomenon but certain signs from God that confirm the divine origin of what is taught about him and, therefore, their absolute truthfulness. The purpose of testifying may also be to deepen the understanding of the truths already taught and prod believers to a more faithful and diligent adherence to the revealed teachings, especially in times of complacency and negligence. These 'true' signs from God confer moral obligations on his people to respond to them with faith and filial love. The making of testimony in the church however differs slightly from the way it is done in Pentecostal churches in that it is simply made and not punctuated with repeated expressions such as *Praise.....the Lord*, and the usual response of *halleluiah* or *A.....men by the audience*, which characterize testimony making of the Pentecostals.

The testimonies bring to light the other aspect of Pentecostal practice in the PCC: that of spiritual healing. One thing that differentiates the Pentecostal churches from the mainline churches is the stress on spiritual healing (Akoko 2002, Nichol 1966, Opoky undated). The Pentecostals believe that physical illness can be treated through spiritual means. A good number of them prefer praying to physically ill people than taking them to the hospital for treatment. They believe that everyone can have this spiritual ability to treat illnesses. It is like channelling healing energy from its spiritual source to someone who needs it. The channel is usually a person, who could be called a healer, and the healing energy is usually transferred to the patient through the healer. The healing does not come from the healer, but through him. Spiritual healing is believed to work on the body, mind and spirit, which are seen as one unit that must harmonize for good health. The healer could accomplish this by placing his hand on the person being treated to channel the energy from the higher source. It is believed that spiritual healing can help mental and emotional problems and physical conditions such as a swollen stomach. Testimonies from people who have been healed are usually made during crusades and regular church services. In the case of the Molyko congregation, the testimonies reveal this belief in spiritual healing among these Christians because most of them revolve around spiritual intervention in overcoming a difficulty. Unlike the other denominations, Pentecostalism, with its faith healing doctrine, provides a strong solution to the

problem of ill health thereby attracting many people. Many people have had to join the Pentecostal faith because of their own ill health or that of a relation. In the case of the Molyko congregation, members believe that rather than defecting to Pentecostal churches for spiritual healing, they could adopt the practice within their precincts.

### Factors which have contributed to this development in the church

One of the reasons is a clear Nigerian influence. Nigeria is a very influential neighbour of Cameroon and there is much diffusion of cultures between the two countries. Pentecostalism in Cameroon is highly influenced by the Pentecostal scenario in Nigeria. Most of the Pentecostal churches in Cameroon have their origin from Nigeria. These churches are either branches of those already operating in Nigeria or were either founded by Nigerians living in Cameroon or Cameroonians who had lived and were converted in Nigeria (Akoko 2002, Gifford 1998, UB Sociology and Anthropology students' survey of churches in Buea and environs 2003). Some years ago, it was difficult to hear gospel music played out of churches. The only other places (out of church) where religious music had a large audience were funerals. Today, however, things have changed. Religious music is 'en vogue'. It is played everywhere: in homes, bars, restaurants, markets, discotheques, and even nightclubs. What is therefore amazing is that most of the gospel songs, which most Cameroonians listen to, are not homemade but Pentecostal songs from Nigeria. The fact that the lyrics are in English and the rhythm nice is, however, no barrier to its listeners, especially those in the French speaking part of the country. People enjoy it as they sing and dance to its rhythm (*Cameroon tribune* No 8139/4424 of 15 July 2004). An example of this music, which hit the airwaves in 2003 and continues to do so, is the Album of Agatha Moses entitled, *Nigerian Praise*. The album is a non-stop compact disc and audiocassette recorded, piece. It has won the hearts of many Cameroonians that the author, on several occasions, has been invited to stage in Cameroon and wherever she went attendance was very high. Because of the popularity of Nigerian gospel music, Cameroonians choral musicians and groups, in a bid to satisfy their audience, have started playing music with similar rhythm and lyrics. For instance, the CYF group of Molyko recently released a music album entitled, *Hour of Victory*, which has a semblance of Nigerian gospel mission, most especially that of Agatha Moses. Coming shortly after that of Agatha Moses, there is no doubt that the group must have been influenced by the success of *Nigerian Praise*. It is also a non-stop album with modern musical instruments similar to those used by Agatha Moses. It has equally recorded tremendous success, is listened and danced widely in the country and it has given

the group some recognition. According to the leader of the group, they have been compelled several times to meet their producer to make more copies to meet up with the increasing demand despite pirated copies in the market.

Moreover, with the country's liberalization of the audio-visual sector in April 2001,<sup>8</sup> the first private radio stations in the English speaking part of the country were run by Pentecostal leaders. Most of their airtime is used in either broadcasting sermons preached in Nigeria by Pentecostal pastors or Nigeria gospel music. In Molyko, there is the Revival Gospel Radio Station run by a pastor of Full Gospel Mission. It specialises in preaching the word of God and playing gospel music, most of these from Nigeria. This station is highly listened to in Buea and its environs because of its moving sermons and Nigerian Pentecostal songs. It has had an influence on the singing and dancing of Pentecostal music in the Molyko Presbyterian Church because some of the moving songs are first heard and played several times to entertain the public on the station.

It could also be argued that for reasons such as the economic crisis, insecurity and the condemnation of secular dancing by Christianity, many people no longer go to nightclubs. To satisfy their dancing craving, they, therefore, find the church, with Christian music free of charge as the best alternative. Moreover, in the Molyko neighbourhood, only one nightclub existed, which had long been closed down because attendance dropped for the above reasons. Being a neighbourhood full of youths with a desire to dance, the church seems to provide the best alternative.

Another cause of the ongoing pentecostalisation process in the PCC is the influence of Nigerian movies. For about 15 years now an estimated \$45 million yearly film industry, nickname 'Nollywood', drawing comparisons to India's film industry 'Bollywood', based in Bombay and the American 'Hollywood' film industry, has developed in Nigeria. According to BBC website, Nollywood is now the third largest film industry in the world in terms of film production, which is currently up to ten movies a week and each takes four to ten days to make. Africans have particularly enjoyed Nigerian movies in and out of the continents. They have become so popular to them at the expense of Western, Indian and Chinese movies that actors from Ghana, Kenya and Cameroon leave to act in Nigeria ([www.isureveille.com/vnews/display](http://www.isureveille.com/vnews/display)), Muluh et al, unpublished). According to a survey carried out in Molyko by Muluh et al, about 96.6 % of the population is engaged in watching Nigerian videos and on why they prefer them to others, reasons range from educative, informative, portray God's supremacy, entertaining, depict reality, portray maturity to the fact that

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<sup>8</sup> See Cameroon Law No 90/052 of 19 December 1990 and 2000/158 of 3 April 2000 on freedom of mass communication and its text of application respectively.

they portray a culture which they can easily identify with. The movies relay various messages to its audience ranging from, *God protects his people*, *We should honour our parents*, *Trust carefully*, *Prayer is the key*, *Tolerance is a virtue*, *Wealth is nothing* to *Dangers in blood pacts*. In the Molyko neighbourhood, trading in Nigerian movies has become brisk business. Numerous video parlours, which have seats for between 30 to 80 persons, now exist for people who cannot afford to buy video players to go and pay to watch these movies. For those who have video players at home, they either buy the films or go to film rental shops, which many exist in the neighbourhood, to borrow these films to watch at home (Muluh et al, unpublished). Most of those intended to impart a Christian message have a Pentecostal doctrinal underpin. They exhibit extremely popular dramas, which stage spiritual healing, the trials and tribulations of converts, gory satanic machinations and the eventual triumph of the protagonists.

It is obvious that spiritual healing, portrayed in these movies, has had an impact on the Christians of the Molyko congregation of the PCC. Moreover, with the prevalence of many diseases such as malaria, the incurable HIV/AIDS, coupled with the economic crisis, which has made it difficult for a majority of Cameroonians to afford Western or even traditional medical care, these Nigerian movies have contributed in making the members of the congregation to embrace spiritual healing as a solution to problems of health.

In an article in the *Cameroon Panorama* on the impact of Nigerian films on Anglophone Cameroon, Tatah Mbuy has made a similar argument. He believes that the Nigerian film industry has influenced the mushrooming of charlatan pastors who want to make a fortune from what some of the movies Reveal. He reveals that:

These charlatans appear in our town and establish themselves as pastors, who work miracles, release people from the clutches of demonic powers and liberate them from occult forces and it seems that any incomprehensible utterance of such pastors (in the name of speaking in tongues) can work magic.

Mbuy argues that the films have made Cameroonian children to grow up to believe this and many people are now caught up in these Pentecostal practices. For instance, members of mainline churches find it just normal to begin a prayer with 'praise....the. Lord', 'A...men', 'Alleluia'. One hears phrases like 'I am covered with the blood of Jesus' and 'I am a child of Jehovah'. Little kids think it is very Catholic to begin a prayer with another Pentecostal practice of 'Jah Jehovah' as portrayed in some of the films (*Cameroon Panorama* No. 556 of February 2004).

From the above discussion, it is clear that Pentecostal practices are being introduced in some congregations, including Molyko, of the PCC. The leaders of

the church somehow encourage this development, which is initiated by the ordinary Christians. For instance, in his presentation during the congregational meeting of August 8, 2004, the pastor of Molyko encouraged members to attend the mid-week prayer sessions, where they could make testimonies of the good things God has done for them. He equally appreciated the singing and dancing spirits of the Christians, which he believes have made the church very lively. Equally, the closeness of the congregation to the Synod office and the fact that some of its members are drawn from the staff of this office, are enough evidence that the authorities of the church is aware of this development.

Though the pastor of the church encouraged this development in his address, he discouraged the frequent use of Pentecostal practices such as ‘Praise...the Lord’, ‘alleluia’, ‘A....men’ in the congregation during worship. It is for this reason that the session of the congregation slammed tough sanctions on the CYF for using these expressions during a worship service. It all started on 9 January 2005, when the president of the CYF group (Ashu-Arrey) prepared and presented a sermon, which adopted total Pentecostal-style preaching to the congregation. The sermon was punctuated with the frequent shouts of ‘Praise....the Lord’, ‘alleluia’ by the preacher and the spontaneous response of ‘A....men’ by members of the CYF and some others from the congregation. This sermon also lasted about 1 hour (Pentecostals sermons last for at least 1 hour) instead of between 15 to 20 minutes prescribed by the church authorities. Members of the congregation received the sermon with mixed feelings. Majority supported it and followed to the end, few did not and left the service before it could be over, while others were neutral. The session of the church reacted by again cautioning preachers and the congregation to abstain from using such phrases, which they termed ‘unpresbyterian’, during sermons. Because of the fear of having a similar sermon, Ashu-Arrey, who had been programmed to preach a month later, was not allowed to do so. The pastor arranged, without informing him until the last minute, with another person to replace him for that day. Arguing that their member was only informed at the moment he was about to go to the pulpit and no reason advanced for the action, the CYF group felt that it was a ploy against them. They reacted by disturbing throughout the sermon. The session also reacted by suspending the group and its activities for three months. In addition, each member could only be readmitted into the group, after this period, on the presentation of an application, subject to scrutiny by the session. It also suspended permanently about seven executive members of the group. However, the three months elapsed and the group resumed its activities, without all the sanctions being implemented. For instance, no applications were required for readmission and no executive member was suspended permanently except the president and song leader that were asked to write applications for readmission,



which they did. There is no doubt that the sanctions were relaxed because the ordinary members of the congregation showed their disapproval. The problem did not however raise significant division among the Christians because the action of the session did not affect all Pentecostal practices being introduced in the church.

This development points out that some members of the church are not comfortable with the introduction of Pentecostal practices, but this number seems minimal to make their voices heard. Unlike the Yaounde case, the division is not so visible and it has not degenerated into the Northwest/Southwest divide, which characterised the former. The following are case studies of members of the church, which I conducted to know their reactions to this development in the congregation. The respondents, selected to represent various groups, ages origins and positions in the congregation, all showed affirmative to the development.

### *Sam*

Sam is among the leaders of the church who uphold the Pentecostal practices. Being an elder and one of the founders of the congregation who has held several positions, his influence in making the process smooth cannot be minimised. As a member of the session, he definitely argued for the moderation of the sanctions meted on the CYF group.

Sam, about 57 years old and of Northwest origin, had been an elder in the congregation for over eight years. He migrated from the Northwest to the Southwest province some 28 years ago. Before migrating to the Southwest province, he was a probationer teacher in one of the Presbyterian primary schools in the Northwest province and because of the unattractive remuneration, he migrated to the Southwest where he believed live could be better. When he came to the Southwest province, he decided to settle and do retail trade in Molyko. From this business, he has been able to put up his own living home and another building of 12 rooms, which is rented to students. He got married to a Southwest indigene and they have five children. Sam is one of the founding members of the congregation and he has been uninterruptedly active in the congregation since its creation. This has made him to be versed with the history, politics or the ins and outs of the congregation. Before becoming an elder, he had occupied other positions in the congregation among which were congregational Secretary, member of projects, finance and harvest committees. He looks simple, tolerant and is loved by many members of the congregation. These probably account for why he has occupied many positions of responsibility in the church.

On the pentecostalization of the congregation, Sam is very okay with the development but he does not see the practices as typical of the Pentecostals. He revealed that as one of the founders of the congregation and as one who has been

uninterruptedly active in its activities, the Molyko congregation has become so lively and attractive to many, even non-Presbyterian Christian, in the past few years. He believes this has been thanks to its CYF group, which has, through its practices, left an unprecedented mark in the animation of the congregation.

He revealed that when the congregation started, the growth rate was not as high as it is at the moment. He argues that though many have attributed it to the creation of the University, many other people that he knows who have nothing to do with the university, have been converted to Presbyterianism in the Molyko PCC because of its attractive worship style. In addition, the number of backsliders coming back for readmission in the congregation has increased as compared to the past. He revealed that all these are as a result of the lively nature of its worship style, which is wrongly interpreted as Pentecostalism.

One thing, which caught my attention in his house when I went for this interview, was his concrete manifestation of love for some of the practices earlier mentioned. One was that his radio was loudly tuned to the 'Revival Gospel Radio', which was at the time playing Gospel music from Nigeria. He was in the house alone and had definitely put it at high volume because of the love he had for the music. Though the interviewing was going on, he preferred to reduce the volume of the radio (though still high to me) rather than putting it off completely. Secondly, I also observed a number of inscriptions (which are typical of the Pentecostals) put on the wall, doors and cupboards of the house. Some of them read, *Jesus Saves, This family is covered by the blood of Jesus, Jesus is the head of this family; the unforeseen guest at every meal and the silent listener to every conversation, The devil has lost the battle*. Most of these inscriptions are prepared in Nigeria and are sold in Cameroon by hawkers and in Christian literature centres run by Pentecostal churches.

From all these, Sam is undeniably among the elders who support the Pentecostal practices in the church. There are however only three (among whom is the chairman) of the twelve elders of the church that I realised are not in support of some of the practices. The chairman of the congregation does not support the Pentecostal expressions, singing and dancing in church. In an interview with the chairman, I realised he would have loved that the church concentrates on the church hymnal for general singing but saw himself powerless in the midst of a vast majority that contrast with him. He believes that the Presbyterian Church must uphold its own traditional hymnbook, else its own singing identity would be lost. Some of the ordinary Christians I interviewed held the opinion that the chairman of the congregation used his position to coerce the church session to suspend the CYF group, which he hated for its Pentecostal practices. They believe (certainly true) that if members of the congregation were

consulted on the CYF problem, a vast majority would not have supported the sanctions.

### *Namondo*

Namondo's case here is taken to represent the ordinary members whose role in enhancing the development cannot be minimised. The ordinary people make up the majority of members of the congregation and by virtue of this they are able to sway things in their favour. If they did not like the Pentecostal practices, it would have been difficult to practise them in the church and depriving them of what they like might generate problems in the church. As indicated, this accounts for why there was some moderation in handling the CYF crisis of the congregation.

Somewhere in her mid thirties, Namondo is of the Bakweri ethnic group. She is about 1.6 meters in height, fat, dark and very humorous. A spinster with two kids, she is a trained primary school teacher teaching with the Government Practising Primary School Molyko. She was born in her native Molyko quarter, where she did all her primary, secondary and teacher's education. She regularly attends the mid-week prayer session and it was after one of such meetings that she was cornered for this interview. Hardly did the interview go for five minutes without being interrupted by some jokes made by her. When I commented that she looks so humorous, little did I know she somehow has a religious reason for this. She revealed that making people laugh, even in the midst of difficulties or sorrows has always been part of her. She argues that laughter is a sign of happiness and as a Christian, she tries to keep herself and others happy by always doing or saying things that would provoke laughter. She believes a Christian should always be happy for being alive and for the good things God has done for him/her.

Namondo does not belong to any group and does not occupy any post of responsibility in the church but could be found very present in almost every church activity. She however helps in coordinating those who do not belong to any group (PCC members who do not belong to any group in a congregation are nicknamed *pastor's group*) when it comes to raising money for any church activity according to groups. For instance, building project, harvest thanks giving, feeding of the pastor and his family, and helping a needy member or other congregations or money requested by the Synod Office for PCC activities. She argued that even though she does not belong to any group, coordinating the pastor's group is a great service she has been rendering to the church that very few would like to do. Members of this group (it is the biggest) can only be mobilised for fund raising on Sundays during church service unlike other groups, which this is eased during weekdays when they meet to plan and Review their

activities. However, Namondo nurses the hope of joining the CWF at a time she believes would be appropriate for her.

She is among those who uphold the Pentecostal practices in the church though she argued that they are not typical of Pentecostalism. For instance, she dances so much in church during singing of choruses. According to her, each Christian is expected to be always happy and singing and dancing are expressions of happiness. Asked about those who come to church but do not like to take part in singing and dancing or churches that members do not dance, her response was:

Anybody who does not sing and dance in church is definitely one who is lost in faith. It is useless for such a person to be wasting his time to come to church every Sunday when he does not show happiness to God. Such a person is not different from those who do not come to church. I encourage members who do not dance in church and churches that do not allow for dancing to do so because dancing to the Lord portrays one's happiness.

Her regular attendance of mid-week prayer session, where testimonies are made, is also evidence that she endorses the Pentecostal practices taking place in the church. She strongly supports the making of testimonies. On one occasion I listened to one she made on an attempted theft in her house one night, which she believed God intervened to avert it. On why she thinks testimonies must be made, she said:

If you believe in God, God can save you from dangerous situations and as a Christians it is good to share such an experience with other Christians so that they too can learn a lesson from it. If you refuse to testify God's goodness you are not doing good to those who do not believe in him and also it would be like you do not appreciate or acknowledge his goodness. Testifying God's good work should not be misconstrued as being part of a particular faith. All Christians should be encouraged to make testimonies.

Namondo equally endorses spiritual healing though she admitted that she has never had a problem that has pushed her to use the method. She revealed an instance where one of her cousins had difficulties to cure a prolonged *frontal headache* troubling her but this was solved after intensive prayer by a local PCC pastor in her residence.

### *Thomas*

As indicated there is no tribal line in the Pentecostal practice. Members of the congregation, no matter the province of origin, do like the Pentecostal practices. Unlike the Yaounde case, this has also been very important in enhancing the development. Unlike Namondo and like Sam, Thomas does not come from the South West province but they are united in the practices. Thomas' case here also indicates the influence of the practices in bringing back backsliders. He backslid from the church but was attracted back by the Pentecostal practices.

Thomas is a tall, dark and slim man who migrated from Ngwo in the Northwest to the Southwest province in 1962 to work in the plantations of the

CDC. He dropped out of primary school in standard one because his father died and there was no other person to sponsor him in school. It was because of this inability to continue schooling that he decided to come to the Southwest. He got married while working in the Tiko banana plantation in 1966 and unfortunately he lost his wife, with whom they had three children, in February 1994. One is a taxi driver in Buea while the other two (girls) are married. After working for over 8 years in Tiko, he was transferred to the banana plantation in Molyko, where he lived in a CDC camp. In preparation for his retirement, he bought a piece of land in Molyko where he built his retirement home. He retired from the CDC in 1991 and has since been engaged in full-time farming. He cultivates yams, cocoa, cocoyams, plantains and some vegetable.

Though born into a Presbyterian family, Thomas backslid from the church when he came to the Southwest province but came back for readmission in the Molyko congregation in 1994. Though he backslid, his wife was a very regular member of the Molyko congregation and until her death, she was a member of the Alleluia Choir group of the congregation. In 1997 he decided to join the Christian Men Fellowship (CMF) of the congregation. On why he backslid but later came for readmission, Thomas explained that:

Before I come down to the coast, I was very serious in the church in my village. But the time I reach here, the way we were working for the CDC make us not to go to church because we use to work on Sunday. I was a security man and a security man did not have a Sunday as the other labourers. We were many of us in this department. This make me to forget of church for a long time. But the time my wife died, and the things the church people came and do make me to go back to church. The time my wife died, I did not have money to burry her but church people give me many things including money which help me to add to the one other people give me and my own to burry her. If my wife was not going to church I was to suffer. Many people came for the die. They sing many songs and dance which was very good to me for many days. The songs were very good. Because of the help that church people give me and the fine song and dance in my yard that time I decide to go back to church.

From Thomas's explanation, it is clear that the singing and dancing during the funeral of his wife contributed in bringing him back to the church. As it is the practice, the congregation had come to conduct the funeral of his wife, who was an active member of the church. Most of the songs used, not only by the Molyko congregation, to animate funerals are Nigerian Pentecostal songs, played either on tapes, compact disc or sung by those present. Thomas' case seems to confirm Sam argument that the lively singing and dancing have attracted many people into the church and brought back backsliders. It is also very likely that the assistance given to him by the church to burry his wife spurred him to go back to the church.

### *Metuge*

Like Namondo, Metuge holds neither a position in the church nor belongs to any church group. He loves the practices and as an ordinary member of the church he too has an influence in enhancing the practices.

Metuge was born in 1961 in the Bakossi land of the South West Province. He is about 1.6 meters tall, and with a brown complexion. He is a graduate of the Higher Teacher's Training College Yaounde and he equally did a Masters degree in Education in the University of Buea. He is Chief of Service for Financial and administrative Affairs in the Local Government Training Centre Buea. Metuge was posted to teach in the Government Bilingual High School Yaounde immediately he graduated from the teacher's training college and later transferred to teach in the Local Government Training Centre Buea in 1992, where he was appointed Chief of Service in 2001. He did his Masters degree while already working with the Local Government Training Centre in 2005. Being an educationist and a dynamic man, he is also the proprietor of a secondary school (Salvation Bilingual High School) in Molyko. He is married and a father of five children. His wife too, a graduate of the lower cycle of the Higher Teacher's Training College, is Chief of Service for Administrative and Financial Affairs in the Divisional Delegation of primary education, Limbe. His wife was Roman Catholic but about eight years ago, she converted to the Presbyterian faith in the Molyko congregation. She is an active member of the CWF and one of the choir groups (Ndola Christo) of the congregation. As chief of service and proprietor of a secondary school, it was not easy to arrange for this interview as most often, he had a tight schedule. Moreover, he does not like drinking, which I could have taken advantage of to interview him over a bottle of drink in a drinking spot. However, after several unsuccessful attempts to interview him, I decided one evening to wait for him late in the evening in his house where I succeeded to interview him.

Metuge was born into a peasant Presbyterian family where his ailing mother had held position of church elder in his native village in the early seventies. As evidence of his parent's commitment to the Presbyterian faith, he, including two of his brothers, did all their primary, secondary and high school education in Presbyterian institutions (despite the high fees paid in these schools) before proceeding to state universities.

He joined the Molyko congregation when he came on transfer to Buea but he has not joined any church group. He told me that his friends in the Christian Men Fellowship (CMF) group have been mounting pressure on him to join the group but because of his tight schedule he has not been able to do so. As he revealed:

I really like to join the CMF but my nature of work does not permit me to do so. They meet regularly twice a week in the afternoon; at a time I am always in Salvation College to manage the affairs of the school after closing from the Local government Training Centre. In

addition the training period of one year for new members is so intensive and time-consuming that it is not just possible for me to meet up. I can only do so when I must have had a good principal to manage Salvation College even in my absence. I am looking for one and as soon as this is done, my workload is going to reduce thereby giving me the opportunity to join the CMF.

Though Metuge's schedule does not permit him to join a church group, the Session of the church has on three conservative harvest seasons appointed him member of the Harvest Committee. He was even made president of the committee in 2004, a daunting task, which he told me, he managed to accomplish. The session's interest in getting him involved in the organisation of harvest activities is not unconnected with his popularity and financial position. His position in the Local Government Training Centre and the school he owns, have made him popular in Buea and also made people to believe that he is rich. By making him member and president of the Harvest Committee, the likely intentions were not only to enable him use his popularity to influence people to contribute much money for the church but also to push him to make substantial donation for the exercise.

Metuge very much appreciates the development in the church though he does not see it as pentecostalization of the congregation. He argued that what is happening in the church is a kind of revival, which is necessary in Christianity. Like Namondo, he sees singing accompanied by dancing in a Christian gathering as a collective expression of joy and thanks to the Lord. Though he does not attend the mid-week prayer session, to make his testimonies, I remarked, in course of this interview, that he believes in testimony making. For instance, he testified that Salvation College, in the past three years, has been performing very well in certificate examinations not much because of the ingenuity of the students and the administration but the intervention of God.

### *Sarah*

Sarah is among those who so much love the practices but may not be aware of its strangeness in the PCC. Ma Sarah, as she is commonly called because of her age, is a slim, attractive and fair woman whose age could be estimated above 85 years. She comes from Mbonge, in Meme Division of the Southwest province. She is not literate and could speak Pidgin English and her native language. She was born in her native village where she got married and had eight children. She lost her husband in 1985 and after living alone in the village for about 11 years after the death, one of her children (a business man in Buea) decided to bring her to live with him in Buea because she was getting frail and could not support herself in the village any longer.

Right back in the village, Ma had been active in church activities. She was a founding member of the CWF in her local congregation in the early sixties.

When she came to Buea, she continued to worship in the Molyko congregation where her daughter-in-law (a nurse in the Buea district hospital) is member of the CWF group. Because of her age, she no longer participates in CWF activities in Buea but other members of the group see her as their mother and accord her much respect. Her son, who brought her to Buea, has little interest in religious matters. He rarely comes to church and his interest seems tailored more towards his business. It is thanks to her daughter-in-law that Ma comes to church every Sunday. Her daughter-in-law takes care of all her financial obligations to the church.

Though very frail, Ma is often joyous when she is in Church. She dances along with others in church and usually when she is dancing with the cue to the front to make her offering, she slows down the movement of the people behind her because of her inability to move fast. Most of the choruses Ma can sing belong to the old generation of choruses (these were never brought in from Nigeria) in the PCC. These choruses are either in the local languages or Pidgin English. Though Ma is not familiar with Pentecostal choruses from Nigeria (most of them are in good English, which she does not understand), she enjoys listening and dancing them. She could be seen making all efforts to sing along with others despite the handicap.

Coming from a rural area, Ma does not seem to see singing accompanied by dancing in the Molyko PCC as strange. She sees it as similar to the traditional practice among PCC Christians in rural areas of singing and dancing traditional PCC or locally composed choruses during death celebrations out of the church. As she puts this in Pidgin:

Ma bikin, no bi for sing, dance for God na old ting. No bi pipo de dance alonge when church man die for all conteri. For sing dance na for show glad. Glad de for ma hat time wey I de sing for church.

## Why the authorities rejected earlier attempts but condone the present development

From the discussion, it is certain that the PCC would tolerate Pentecostal practices that do not split a congregation or the church as a whole. The authorities place the unity of the church ahead of some doctrinal or practical digression. The Moderator revealed this clearly in an interview he granted to the *Presbyterian Newsletter* after the ban on the 'revival' movement in which he stated:

If those practices, which were being carried in the name of 'revival', had resulted in the overall growth and improvement of the church's condition, they would not have created any problem.



He further pointed out that in the congregation (Bastos) where these practices were strongly upheld, they rather helped to diminish the growth of the congregations. So in that sense they could be judged to be harmful (Umenei 1995). There was no doubt that the 'Born-again' movement led by Fomum and the 'Pilot Revival group in Cameroon' led by Bame Bame, divided the congregation and threatened the very survival not only of the congregation but the church as a whole. The pentecostalization of the Molyko congregation is causing little or no division in the church. It seems to be favoured by a greater majority of members of the congregation and as such the church authorities is yet to object. They might be aware that if they try to disrupt or ban the practices, this might cause the disintegration of the congregation. That is why the youths of the church are still allowed to carryout their Pentecostal practices within the church undisturbed. Compared to the previous cases in Yaounde, it is yet, though very visible, to degenerate to a point, which the central authorities of the church should show concern.

Though the authorities of the PCC is very concerned with unity of the church, they seem to simultaneously, accept doctrines and practices introduced from outside with some degree of scrutiny. According to Reverend H. Awasom (Moderator of the PCC at the time of the 'revival' crisis), not all Pentecostal practices are acceptable in the PCC, for if this were allowed to take place, the church would be losing its cherished reformed traditions. As he aptly puts it:

We have to revive, but we shall do so as the Holy Spirit guides and directs us as Presbyterians, so that even in our revived nature we shall remain Cameroonian Christians of the PCC. That is what God in His gracious mercy has called us to be and we shall praise Him for it (Moderator's speech on 38 anniversary of the church).

For instance, glossolalia is one of the Pentecostal practices, which the authorities would detest its introduction in any of its congregations. In the interview with the PCC newsletter, the Moderator showed this disapproval by stating that:

I do not think that people need to shout and scream and scream and scream, in order to show that they are possessed by the spirit or they have been won over by Christ. Of course, the bible says that the spirit blows where it wills. And the bible says that there are various gifts of the spirit, so if one person's gift is probably to shout or speak in tongues, then I think the problem should not be that he mixes it up as the absolute form of Christianity (Umenei 1995).

Rebaptising PCC Christians is another practice that is not acceptable by the church authorities. The Pentecostals argue that an individual can only be baptised if he repents of his sins and 'gives his life' to Christ. On the basis of this, Fomum was rebaptising the Christians to the dislike of the authorities. He equally rebaptised those who were baptised as infants in the PCC because he argued that as infants, they were not mature enough to take the crucial decision of

repentance. Moreover, they committed no sin in infancy that warranted repentance. The PCC baptises by sprinkling of water on the head of the Christian in the church while the Pentecostals do it by immersion in a pool. In an interview I had with Reverend Dr Lekunze (a PCC Minister), the PCC recognizes baptism by immersion but because of its infant baptism practice and for convenience, the church prefers baptism by sprinkling. A Christian who had undergone baptism by immersion in any other church but decides to join the PCC is never rebaptised because the church recognizes the method. The Pentecostals renounce the PCC method and as such anybody who defects from the PCC to a Pentecostal group, must be rebaptised by immersion. Unlike Bame Bame, Fomum's rebaptism of those who decided to go along with him was the last straw that caused the church authorities to ban his movement in all PCC congregations. According to Lekunze (a PCC clergy), baptism is an important ritual of initiation into Christianity and when the PCC has done it in a manner it believes is correct and some one contradicts it by rebaptising the Christians, it is like claiming that the PCC cannot interpret the Bible. As a church, which cherishes its reformed tradition, it would not tolerate this in any of its churches. Moreover, it would seem the majority of members of the PCC cherish the church's method of Baptism and would equally detest any attempts at rebaptising them. Fortunately, this practice, which could cause division among the Christians of Molyko, is not among the Pentecostal practices being introduced in the congregation. In a random sampling survey conducted on thirty Christians of the Molyko congregation on two different Sundays, all the respondents upheld the PCC baptism method and would detest rebaptism in any form. Some of them argued that they were born Presbyterians and so long as they remain in this faith, they must abide by their method. Others claim that those who rebaptise people are hypocrites (obvious reference to Pentecostal churches) who believe that they best understand the bible, which is not necessarily the case. Others claim that what is important is the relationship of an individual with God and not the method of baptism. This group holds that Baptism is just symbolic.

## Conclusion

I have attempted in this study to show a gradual pentecostalization process, which is taking place in some congregations of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. Most interestingly is the fact that this development is coming from below and the authorities of the church seem to allow it to pass in the congregations involved.

Though the article reveals a strong Nigerian influence, the Pentecostals seem to give a different interpretation to this. In an interview with Tamfu Wilson (a

Pentecostal pastor), he argues that this is a new spiritual revival in the PCC, a revival that has enabled members of the church to move away from their biblical shallowness to an in-depth understanding of it. Tamfu believes that the mainline churches are so shallow in their knowledge of the bible and have always rejected anyone who tries to introduce other doctrines and practices, which are in line with the teachings of the bible. He sees the cases of Bame Bame and Fomum as good examples of this rejection in a mainline church. He attributes the churches' shallowness in the understanding of the bible to the dogmatic doctrines and practices that they inherited from their mother churches. He argues that these churches so much believe, in an uncritical manner, on the doctrines and practices handed over to them by their mother churches to a point that other important doctrines and practices are seen as unbiblical. He believes that the pentecostalization of the PCC is clearly a manifestation of salvation, which has entered members of the church and has made them to discover Christ and to feel his reality. As he puts it, *it is a spontaneous overflow of the fact that God has visited them*. He believes that this salvation has enabled them to get out of the dogmatism and they are beginning to interpret the bible rightly. It is like they have somehow been liberated from bondage and with this freedom, they are better able to interpret the word of God and put it in practice with no restriction. He also likens this development to a thief who has been stealing for long and at a certain point he realises that stealing is evil and decides to turn his back to the evil.

Though it reveals that PCC authorities place congregation unity above the introduction of Pentecostal practices, it is obvious, based on the past, that they would want to avoid further defection of members to other churches by allowing them to carry on these Pentecostal practices, which most of them cherish. The history of the church after independence and before the Fomum's 'Born-again' controversy reveals instances of splinter groups in the church. For instance, in the 60s, some members of the church from the Bakweri ethnic group, insisted, against the faith of the church, to continue wearing the fertility bangle<sup>9</sup>. After fruitless persuasion, the Synod reacted by banning this practice in the church. And so a number of Christians broke away to form the Native Presbyterian Church, which in 1969 obtained a Prime Ministerial authorisation to operate as The Cameroon church of Christ. Also, in the late 70s and early 80s, some Christians of the PCC in Limbe, wanted the church to remain Presbyterian but to adopt the Anglican worship style. The Synod argued that the PCC could not mix

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<sup>9</sup> The fertility bangle and beads were a Bakweri traditional practice in which the people believed that the bangle and bead were sacred objects, which could improve fertility in humans and protect the people when worn. Christianity condemns the use of such objects in worship but some Bakweri Christians insisted on not stopping the practice and this put them into problems with various Christian groups.

up its practices with those of another church and so refused to allow that take place in any of its congregations. The result was that those who advocated it and their followers left the church. (Nyansako-Ni-Nku 1990). The Fomum and Bame Bame movements also resulted each in the defection of members, who could not freely put into practice their Christian beliefs in the PCC, to other churches. The leader of each group ended up founding a new church (CMFI of Fomum and the Church of Patmos of Bame Bame), with a bulk of members being their followers during their problems with the PCC. Moreover, the Pentecostal explosion in Cameroon is so worrying not only to the PCC but to all the mainline churches. There is a continuous erosion of members of mainline churches for various reasons to the Pentecostal churches<sup>10</sup>. Buea, in particular has within the years witnessed this explosion in Pentecostalism and for this reason, the PCC would be taking a risk in waging a war against the pentecostalization of any of its churches in this town as members could easily be persuaded to join the new Pentecostal groups, which they believe could provide them that spiritual nourishment.

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<sup>10</sup> See Akoko, R (2002) New Pentecostalism in the Wake of the Economic Crisis in Cameroon, in: *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 11 (2,) : 539-376.

## Christian churches and the democratization conundrum in Cameroon

In Cameroon by the late 1980s, the one-party system of governance, which had involved heavy state-control and planning of the political, social and economic activities (the so-called developmental state), was widely acknowledged to have reached a dead-end. Standard economic indicators such as gross domestic product and income per capita were declining as the ruling elites high-handedness of was increasingly facing popular resistance. The exigencies of global capitalism, with its accumulationist drive, requires that states restructure their politics by embracing democracy, and their economies by cutting back government expenditure, privatizing and deregulating business activities. Done in the service of a free market, economic efficiency and growth, this constitutes the Washington Consensus, backed by the World Bank and the IMF and used as conditions for loans (Sharon Beder 2003). The reintroduction of multi party politics in Cameroon in the current drive to democratize sub-Saharan Africa should be understood within this international atmosphere.

Twin developments -the reconfiguring of global capitalism and the poor performance of African economies- would leave indelible imprints on many aspects of Cameroon's national political and social life, aspects such as the emergence of hegemonic forces, the intensification of ethnic group politics, the growth of secessionist and irredendist movements, and regionalism (Mbembe 1992; Nyamnjoh 1999; Konings and Nyamnjoh 2000; Mbuagbo 2002). These developments indicate that the state in Cameroon, as in most of Africa, has not

succeeded in winning over large sections of the population, and therefore the current crisis of governance exposes and widens the gap between the state and sections of the national population.

It is in this atmosphere that Christian churches in Cameroon, in line with their vocation to preserve the inalienable rights of humanity, are increasingly articulating a social and political discourse by bringing pressure to bear on the regime (Nyamnjoh 2002; Mbuagbo and Neh Fru 2003; Mbuagbo and Akoko 2004). Church-State-relations in Cameroon are largely a function of opposing understandings and interpretations of the meaning of democracy as it applies to the management of state affairs. The nexus of good governance- transparent, impartial, and accountable redistributive functions of the state, and issues of civil liberties-have become central in the churches' concern to ensure that all Cameroonian political stake holders adhere to agreed-upon democratic principles.

The religious authorities assume that their efforts will curb the arbitrary exercise and abuse of power. Such efforts are congruent with what Garner (2000) and Konings (2003b) see as "renewal" within Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, accompanied by the emergence and growth of many Pentecostal churches with a charismatic message of salvation. The role of religion in Cameroon's politics should be understood in the context of ordinary citizens' struggles to meet their daily needs, and a pertinent question is whether religion has emerged to serve as an anchor on which people can rely, given the state's inability to provide their basic needs and defend their fundamental rights.

Liberation theology, in form and content, has become a pervasive force in the churches' desire to realize human rights and social justice, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and local legislation.<sup>1</sup> Has liberation theology come to liberate Cameroonians? and to what extent and with what means have the churches engaged in these endeavors? What are some of the underlying challenges inherent in the process of participating in the making of a "new" Cameroon?

## Rationalizing the emergence of liberation theology in Cameroon

From creation to God's direct interaction with the world and man, the issue of liberation in all the forms of human enslavement has been an important focus (Atem 2000). From the exodus to the cross, believers have understood that God's

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<sup>1</sup> Liberation theology calls for the church to combine preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments with a deep commitment to social justice: the church should announce in word and action an integral form of salvation, or liberation, from all manifestation of sin, and not merely offer individuals the means of personal salvation through the sacraments.

intention has been to liberate the oppressed and the captive, so liberation theology could be conceived as a theology of relief from all forms of human indignity-material, moral and spiritual. Today millions of people are deprived of their basic inalienable rights by regimes that keep them in near-total servitude. Therefore any Christian and Christian organization that fails to stand up against such practices by any government “ceases to be the light and the salt of the world,” thereby rendering Christianity irrelevant and inconsequential. Atem concludes that Christ himself was never a mute and passive accomplice in the politics, since he engaged in activities that challenged the practices of the political authorities. It is perhaps with this ethical precept to reject slavery and oppression that the Presbyterian and the Roman Catholic churches in Cameroon are engaged in trying to create a country that respects democratic values, such as respect for human rights and transparency in the management of state affairs.

Before now, the impact of Christianity on politics in Africa, especially in the creation of awareness through its educational institutions (Mazrui 1978), served to awaken Africans, particularly the Western educated elite, to the idea that the colonial assumption of the inferiority of the black race was founded, not on any scientific principles, but on pure racism. In Africa, this awareness marked the early beginnings of the rejection of colonialism and emergence of nationalism. It is in the light of these reflections that some Christian churches in Cameroon have begun trying to make their voices heard against the sociopolitical ills that have eaten deep into the fabric of the country.

The roots of liberation theology can be traced to Latin America in the 1930s, when popular movements began agitating locally against capitalism. Their promoters believed that poverty, alienation, and exploitation were results of capitalism, and the only way of achieving authentic development for the region was to have economic, social and political liberations from the capitalist economies, especially the most powerful one, that of the United States of America. This liberation also implied a confrontation with these groups’ natural allies, their compatriots who controlled the national power structures. Because of urbanization and industrialization, the movements (most frequently of socialist inspiration) demanded greater participation in economic and political life. Political parties of a populist bent took advantage of these movements, but the crisis of developmentalist policies, the appearance of multinational businesses, their growing control of the economy of Latin America, and the rise of militants peasants masses were all were responsible for the loss of political leadership, at different times in different countries, and led to a process of political radicalization. The reaction of the defenders of the established order was even more aggressive; many resorted to severe and brutal forms of repression (Gutierrez 1977).

In the face of all this, individual Christians and the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America, were becoming more politically aware.<sup>2</sup> Priests in ever-increasing proportion were interested in participating in the pastoral decisions of the church, but above all, they wanted the church to break its ties with an unjust order and to fight for the masses, who, in their view, suffered from misery and deprivation. Some priests participated in politics, often in alignment with revolutionary groups. Consequently, some of them were murdered or deported, Christians persecuted, the Roman Catholic press attacked, and ecclesiastical premises searched by the political authorities (Gutierrez 1977). The Vatican did not always support the priests, and its lack of support at times led to friction between Bishops and representatives of the pope.

At the same time, Pentecostalism in Latin America shunned liberation theology and received governmental support. It became a haven for the masses, who believed it provided them with nourishment and spiritual sustenance in the midst of economic hardship (Stoll 1990). In shantytowns around large Brazilian cities, it grew rapidly in popularity (Haralambos 1980). While some Roman Catholic priests were blaming the government for poverty, Pentecostal ministers were telling their followers that poverty resulted from sin. The government condoned Pentecostalism and jailed some of the more-outspoken priests. Worried over the expansion of Pentecostalism, Pope John Paul II in his Santiago meeting in 1992, pointed out that Christians did not find in their ministers the strong sense of God, and that was why they moved to Pentecostal groups to seek religious life; he blamed the priests for involving themselves in liberation theology instead of their parishioners' spiritual needs (Cleary and Steward, Gambino 1992).

In Cameroon before the beginning of President Paul Biya's era in 1982, churches, particularly the mainline churches, played a major role in education and health. However, due to the sociopolitical and economic atmosphere they paid little or no attention to liberation theology. For instance, on 12 March 1962, Ahmadou Ahidjo promulgated a decree prohibiting Cameroonians from making any statements, political or otherwise, that could be construed as critical of his regime, the Cameroon National Union party, or any public authority. Churches were therefore circumspect in addressing political issues. In 1982, the shadow of the Bishop Ndogmo affair was still hanging over all churches. Appointed in 1964, Ndongmo was the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Nkongsamba, a diocese that covered all the Bamileke area. In the late 1960s, the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC) began an armed uprising against the state and the French, and the government responded brutally. People believed that Bishop Ndongmo

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<sup>2</sup> Latin America has been overwhelmingly Roman Catholic for centuries. With the introduction of Pentecostalism, in the early twentieth century, Protestantism, especially Pentecostalism, gained ground at its expense (Brain 1998; Chesnut 1997).



had sided with the “rebels”: he had preached against the government’s repression of the local people, and had threatened that he would urge the people of his diocese not to pay taxes. He was arrested, taken to the military prison in Yaounde, and interrogated for months. In January 1971 a military court convicted him of treason and sentence him to death by firing squad, but this sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. He was sent to a notorious camp in Tchollire, where he had no access to a radio or newspaper, and was kept away from other prisoners. He was freed after five years, just before an election -which enabled Ahidjo to present himself as merciful. However, it is believed that the pardon was part of an agreement between the state and the Vatican according to which Ndongmo was to leave Cameroon for Rome. After living in Rome for a few years, he moved to Canada where he became a citizen. He died in Canada in 1992 and his body was brought back to Cameroon and buried with pomp in his cathedral in Nkongsamba.

Because the economy of Cameroon during the Ahidjo regime (1960 and 1970s) was buoyant, Cameroonians did not face economic challenges, though the political atmosphere was not free (Konings 1996; Takougang and Krieger 1998). When, under the leadership of Paul Biya, Cameroon started facing socio-economic and political collapse, some churches began challenging the political and economic structures and advocating political change; their efforts to bring reforms into the management of the country were not unconnected with what was happening in African countries that were facing similar problems at the same time. In 1990, Biya repealed the 1962 anti-subversion decree. Cameroonian churches then openly began calling for reforms. Churches in Africa during this period played, a major role, as they still do. They have been directly involved in pressing on dictators to effect political change, and even in presiding over the change itself. In some countries, churches have forced dictators to convene national conferences, at which a wide range of groups have discussed the future and initiated political and economic reforms. A remarkable aspect of these conferences was that church leaders were called to preside over.

In Cameroon, the churches that have ceaselessly called for political and social reforms have been the mainline churches, particularly the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) and the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). This chapter is based on the contributions of these churches to Cameroon democracy, and their efforts in seeing that social justice prevail.

The PCC is the historical and constitutional successor to the Basel Mission Church in Cameroon, established in 1886 as an arm of the Evangelical Missionary Society of the Basel Mission in Switzerland. It maintains the spiritual and theological continuity of that church (PCC Constitution). The name was changed from Basel Mission, to The Presbyterian Church in 1957, when the

church gained its independence from the Basel Mission. Its official statistics of 2004 claim about 500,000 members in 1,290 Congregations (Dah 2003; Nyansako-Ni-Nku 1990; PCC church diary 2004). It is the biggest Anglophone church in Cameroon and it should not be confused with its Francophone sister church, the *Eglise Presbyterienne Camerounaise* (EPC). Each is independent of the other in administration and organization. What unites them is their membership in *Federation des Eglises et des Missions Evangeliques du Cameroun* (FEMEC), brought into existence by the government, which preferred to deal with one body, rather than with many. The Roman Catholic Church, the largest Cameroonian Christian group that embraces Francophones and Anglophones, was introduced into the country in 1890, much later than the other mainline churches (the Baptists in 1844 and Presbyterian in 1884). Reports from Catholic Information Service Buea reveal that about 32 percent of the country's estimated 16.5 million people identify with this church. It is truly a national church. Other churches tend to be regional: the PCC is an Anglophone church; the EPC is centered among the Bulus around Yaounde; the *Union des Eglise Baptistes Camerounaise* (another Francophone group) around the Littoral province; and the Lutheran Church around the Adamawa province. The Roman Catholic Church in Cameroon is divided into five ecclesiastical provinces (Bamenda, Yaounde, Douala, Garoua and Bertoua), with twenty-three dioceses.

Unlike Latin America, where states have persecuted priests for advocating social justice, the Biya government has dealt cautiously with religious leaders, no matter how strongly they have criticized his administration. Since the mid-1990s, unidentified people have murdered some Roman Catholic priests and nuns, and the perpetrators have often been suspected to be the members of government hit-squads, but the government has always allayed these suspicions.<sup>3</sup> No evidence has linked the government to any of the killings. The government is aware of religious leaders' influence on their believers and would not risk open persecution; moreover, most of those in power, including Biya (who dropped out of a Catholic Seminary) and his Prime Minister (an active member of the PCC and once a congregation elder), belong to one of these churches and would want to avoid confronting their spiritual leaders in public. The government prefers to adopt a press war to defend its positions. Also, unlike in Latin America, where the Pope confronted his priests for over preaching liberation theology at the expense of the growth of the church in the region, there has been no evidence of him doing this in Cameroon probably, because a great majority of Cameroonians seems to support the priests.

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<sup>3</sup> See the Cameroon Episcopal conference declaration 1995 on the death of Father Mveng (Jumban 1995; Kemajou 1995; Kubuo 1995; Nkemayang 1995).

Pentecostalism has had an imprint in Cameroon. Since the 1990s, the country has witnessed the proliferation of Pentecostal groups, especially in the English speaking provinces. Many started as spillovers from Nigeria. The economic crisis that Cameroon has been experiencing since then accounts for this proliferation (Akoko 2002). With the unemployment being high many people join Pentecostal groups to be employed; others, who cannot afford high medical charges and are threatened or infected with the virus that causes AIDS, join for spiritual healing, which Pentecostal ministers claim they can provide. Before the economic crisis, Cameroon had just two small Pentecostal churches, Full Gospel Mission and Apostolic Church, but it now has numerous groups. A survey carried out in 2004 by the Anthropology students of the University of Buea found that since 1992, more than eighty such have established themselves in Buea and neighbouring villages. Membership in some of them is small. The Pentecostal churches in Cameroon, unlike others in Africa (including Nigeria where most of them have their origin) that have played an important role in opposing political reforms by supporting undemocratic regimes or stood firmly against them, have maintained a neutral political and social stance. Unlike the mainline churches, the Pentecostal churches have had only peripheral influence. This is because their leaders, like those in Latin America, believe and teach that churches should primarily be preoccupied with a spiritual agenda, such as prayer, Bible study, preparation for the sacrament, evangelization, and individual pastoral counseling. Each group, as a body, involves itself in politics only in defense of its official teaching and interest. Individual members are not barred from political issues, but they do not involve themselves actively. They may not belong to and campaign for political parties, and may not form political parties or take part in political demonstrations; they may, however register and vote.

In some Africa countries, Pentecostal groups have often engaged in politics by supporting the regime in place; in other countries, they have been on the side of the opposition political groups. For instance, while the mainline churches in Kenya fully supported the opposition parties, which pressed for democratic reforms during the 1980s, the Pentecostal groups supported the Arap Moi's regime. They received access to the state-controlled media, and they continually portray Moi as a God-fearing leader, guided by principles of peace, love and unity. Moi was under intense external and internal pressure to democratize the country, but the leader of the Redeemed Gospel Church, in one of his televised sermons in February 1992, alleged that Kenya had been like heaven for years under Moi's leadership. He opined that Moi had been appointed by God to lead the country, and Kenyans ought to be grateful for the peace prevailing. He lambasted the mainline churches for pressing for sociopolitical reforms and termed their leaders rebels, who preached their own gospel, not that of Christ. In

Nigeria, Pentecostals render more support to the opposition groups. Before the last presidential elections of 2003, the chairman of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), Lagos State branch, revealed that the Pentecostals had registered all over the nation, and were mobilized to cast their votes for any resourceful and credible candidate who could alleviate the sufferings of the masses and take care of the yearnings of the Pentecostal churches in the country. He claimed that Pentecostals Christians had suffered undue hardships, as each successive government had marginalized them. As a consequence they were now prepared for constructive negotiation with political parties and contestants to enable their members to hold elective and political offices and thereby benefit in the distribution of the national resources.<sup>4</sup> As a sign of disgust with the incumbent regime, and to demonstrate their interest in politics, Pastor Kris Okotie-former pop music star, now the founder and leader of the Pentecostal “Household of God Church,” ran for president, claiming that God had asked him to do so. He started by joining the National Democratic Party, but when he lost that party’s presidential nomination, he joined the Justice Party, which immediately offered him its presidential, but he garnered just 0.3 percent of all votes cast.

Pentecostalism in Kenya and Nigeria is older, more established, and more influential than in Cameroon. The Apostolic Church, the first Pentecostal group in Cameroon, was introduced from Nigeria in 1948, followed by the Full Gospel Mission in 1961. These groups, the lone Pentecostal churches in Cameroon until the early 1990s, had few followers (Akoko 2002). Though Pentecostalism is growing fast in Cameroon, it has neither enough members significantly to influence the political scene there, nor an umbrella association like the PFN to speak on behalf of all its groups. Most members are youths, who join for economic gains; very few are adults who, by virtue of experience and interest, could have political ambitions. If Cameroonians Pentecostalism keeps growing, it could begin to exert political force and speak out on social justice, as have its counterparts in Kenya and Nigeria. An umbrella association to function like the PRN would probably come into being.

## The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and the democratic process

In an interview with the Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) popular program, “Cameroon calling”, on Sunday, 18 May 2003, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, the Reverend Nyansako-Ni-Nku, echoed what his predecessor, the Reverend Awasum, had written in the preface of a book, that he had edited in 1993, on the role of the PCC in democratic struggles in Cameroon. Awasum had dismissed arguments that the church should stay out of

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<sup>4</sup> See the *Nigerian Guardian* Friday, 10 January 2003.

politics, and he lambasted politicians who threatened to ban or outlaw the church because the church dared make its voice heard. He had argued that politics is about organization and running of a society, and the church is the backbone of any society. He had stated that the PCC in every society tries to perform a role assigned to it as God's agent of change in every society and that the church cannot stay aloof from legitimate efforts to determine the destiny of the nation of which it is part: It must not ignore blatant injustices, discrimination, deceit, oppression, turmoil, greed, selfishness, nepotism, rancor, mistrust, political jingoism, disunity and institutionalized corruption-practices that do not comply with the gospel of love as enunciated by Jesus Christ, but have become common in Cameroon. No religion, he argued, let alone the PCC, would condone these ills in any society.

Awasum was making this declaration at a time when Cameroonians were clamoring for a multiparty system of governance. The clamor was not unconnected with the "wind of change" propelled by *Perestroika* and *Glasnost*, which led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and ended the cold war. Taking a cue from other African countries, Cameroonians noted the fall of dictators and one-party regimes through early presidential, legislative and local elections, sovereign national conferences, national debates or consultations, strikes, and mass demonstrations of nonviolent disobedience.

Though Cameroon was a one-party state, it was *de jure* a multi-party state. Exploiting this portion of the constitution, Yondo Mandengue Black gathered some Cameroonians in the 1990 to discuss the formation of a political party. The result was the National Coordination for Democracy and Multi-party System (NCDM), whose existence violated the passed in 1967 –but article 3 of the constitution provided for multi-party politics. In February 1990, before the group could achieve its objective, agents of the security police arrested ten of its members and charged them with holding clandestine meetings, inciting revolt, abusing the president, and producing and distributing pamphlets hostile to the regime, all in broad violation of the Law of Association. The defendants were tried in a special military tribunal in Yaounde: three were found guilty and given prison sentences, two were given suspended sentences, and the rest were acquitted. There was much national and international condemnation of the trial. An Amnesty International report on Cameroon in 1990 described it as:

A mockery and abuse of the judiciary process in order to provide some legal basis for the government's determination to punish supporters of multi-party system (Amnesty International Report on Human Rights Abuse in Cameroon 1990).

The government argued that the defendants had not been tried for attempting to form a political party (Takougang and Krieger 1998; Ngoh, V. 2004). In response to this argument, John Fru Ndi, an Anglophone, filed an application for the

creation of a political party, to be called the Social democratic Front (SDF). In April 1990, the Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement (CPDM) organized protest marches in major cities against multi-party politics. The marchers included top government officials, such as provincial governors, ministers, divisional officers and general managers of the various state Corporations. These officials, who feared losing their privileged positions in the event of the introduction of multi-party politics, carried one common message-“No” to multi-party politics and imported democratic models. Having fulfilled all the legal administrative requirements and procedures, Fru Ndi scheduled the launching of his party for 26 May 1990 in Bamenda. The local administrator, working under orders from Yaounde, banned the launch. Despite the presence of about 2000 troops, stationed throughout the town, to deter the population from coming out, between 30,000-40,000 supporters and sympathizers defied the ban and launched the party at the Ntarinkon Park, a neighborhood where the security people did not expect the launch to take place. As the crowd was retiring, agents of the security forces killed six young adults. The government, instructed its journalist of the state media -the Cameroon Radio and Television Corporation and the *Cameroon Tribune* -to inform the world that the victims had died in a stampede (Mbu, A. 1993; Mezam Division CPDM section protest letter to Biya 1990).

The killing of unarmed marchers drew condemnation-from Cameroonians religious groups, human rights groups, proponents of democracy, the Cameroon Bar Association, university students and staffs, and prominent elderly statesmen, including John Ngu Foncha and Solomon Tandeng Muna (Anglophones, who led the Anglophones into the union with Francophones in Cameroon in 1961). Cameroonians abroad, especially in the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Germany demonstrated in front of their embassies and called for genuine democracy in their country. Feeling pressure from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France (the traditional ally of the regime), and other countries, and recognizing that the political and social situation of the country had deteriorated, Biya agreed to allow multi-party politics. Even then, the Commonwealth, in which Cameroon had applied for membership, continued to insist on the respect for human rights, democratization and good governance in Cameroon, as outlined in the 1991 Harare declaration, before the country could be admitted into the organization. Cameroon was admitted into the Commonwealth in 1995, though observers of the local politics and opposition forces felt this move was unjustified because of the lapses in its democratization.

Though the PCC believes that it should speak out on political issues, its position is that it should do so without bias to any political party or give allegiance to any emerging or existing political party. In a pastoral letter issued by the Synod Committee of the church on 20 March 1991 (a letter entitled “The

Position of the PCC on Multi-party Politics,” which was read to all its congregations), the church stated that democracy thrives best in a society that is politically pluralistic and where governments are the outcome of free and fair elections. The letter encouraged Cameroonian Christians, and particularly lay Presbyterians, to join the political struggle. The committee, barred its pastors from indulging in partisan politics at all levels: it argued that, with the advent of multiple parties in Cameroon, the congregations would consist of a cross section of political parties, with varying political views, and the pastor has a divine responsibility to be a reconciling factor, because politics tends to breed hatred and confusion; however, a pastor has the right to perform his civic obligation of voting, and he should encourage his parishioners to perform their civic duties too by voting for any party of their choice in a free and fair election. A pastor who decided to engage in politics would be required to resign from his pastoral duties, and his political view would not be expected to be interpreted as that of the PCC. He would remain a member of the PCC, if he so desired, and would receive pastoral care from it.

Release of this letter came in the wake of the popular demand for multi-party politics. At that time and in the context, it became necessary for the church to take an official position on the prevailing political and social discourse, and to provide firm counseling to its pastors on the struggle. To make its position clear on political issues when the need arises, the PCC has issued pastoral letters, (read in all its congregations), memos, (presented to political leaders), and sermons. Unlike political parties, it adopts just these methods, and it does not mobilize its members against any particular party. As a group, whose members hold diverse political views, it has adopted these methods because it believes they can help bring change peacefully.

Biya embarked on a nationwide tour during the turbulent period preceding his declaration of multiparty political system for Cameroon. On 27 September 1991, he visited Buea, the capital of South West province, an Anglophone area. Among the officials whom he met was the Synod Clerk of the PCC, who led a delegation of PCC officials to present to him a memo and a copy of the pastoral letter of 20 March 1991. The memo highlighted many pertinent political issues, and decried corruption, tribalism, sectionalism and nepotism-vices that, it argued, had been firmly institutionalized in Cameroon. It expressed worry that though Cameroon was a bilingual country, French dominated in all official domains of communication, to the detriment of English language and its users. (About 80 percent or more of the programs on CRTV are in the French). The memo thanked the president for creating in Buea a University, which had always been the desire of the Anglophones, and prayed that the graduates of the University should not be subjected to the same discrimination that many Anglophones had faced. The

memo advocated the return to a federal system and a defined system of revenue allocation, as in most other liberal democratic societies.

This memo revealed that the PCC was deeply concerned with the anglophone problem. It was the most vocal church in Cameroon on this issue. The Anglophone problem revolves around the continuous marginalization of the Anglophone minority (about 22 percent of the country's population) by the Francophone majority.<sup>5</sup> This marginalization has gradually created an anglophone consciousness: the feeling of being recolonized and marginalized in all spheres of public life. It has produced various anglophone associations and pressure groups, which have developed strategies to fight francophone domination. Some associations-for instance, the Southern Cameroons National Council, the Free West Cameroon Movement, and the Ambazonian Movement-go to the extent of advocating outright succession from a government run by Francophones.

In a sermon given on 7 November 1993, the Moderator of the church intimated that Anglophone Cameroonians are a dispossessed minority in a union that they contracted with French-speaking Cameroonians. He called on Anglophones to rebut Cameroonians who want them to believe that because they are few, they are inferior. The church has always provided assistance to any course dealing with the anglophone problem. In 1994, it provided shelter to the second All Anglophone Conference (AAC) in Bamenda because the conference could not be held elsewhere for fear of police brutality. The first AAC, convened by four prominent Anglophones (Munzu Simon, Ekotang Elad, Anyangwe Calson and Itoe Benjamin), had taken place in Buea in 1993. These men were the Anglophones whom Biya had appointed as members of a committee he had created to draft a new constitution. The aim of the conference was to adopt a common Anglophone stand on constitutional matters relating to the welfare of the Anglophones, a stand that was to be presented to the meeting of the technical committee. The conference was attended by Anglophone personalities of all political leanings, and its major resolution was the return to a federal system of government as the best solution to the Anglophone problem, but the Francophones have continued to object it. The government resisted the convening of the second AAC in Bamenda because it feared that, after the futile attempt at returning to a federal system, it could resolve to fight for Anglophone secession.

On 6 October 1993, regarding the General Certificate of Education (GCE) stalemate of 1993, the PCC presented to the Prime Minister a sharply worded memo, in which it condemned the way the Minister of National education was

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<sup>5</sup> For more on the Anglophone problem in Cameroon, see Konings 2003a; Konings and Nyamnjoh. 1997.



handling the matter, in effect to destroy the most cherished Anglophone certificate examination. It supported the creation of a GCE board independent enough to parry the threat against Anglophone educational system. On successive occasions, francophone Ministers of National Education had attempted to reform the examination to make it similar to the Baccalaureate, francophone certificate. The first attempt, which failed because of resistance from Anglophone students, had dated back to 1983. Anglophone students interpreted the proposed reforms as a subtle attempt by a Francophone-dominated state to assimilate the anglophone educational system. In that period, many irregularities in managing the examination emanated from the Ministry of National Education-, which raised concerns about the credibility of the examination, and the certificates issued. Some of the irregularities included examination leakages, the poor wording of questions, typographical and grammatical errors, no respect for examination timetable, the late arrival of examination materials to some centers, and low-quality material used for certificates. The government resisted the creation of this board, but after much pressure from Anglophones of all political leanings and from pressure groups such as the Confederation of Anglophone Parent-Teachers' Association of Cameroon, the Teachers' Association of Cameroon, and the Cameroon Anglophone Students' Association, which were all formed for this purpose, it was forced to create one in 1993. This was an important victory for the Anglophones in their struggle against the government's determination to destroy the GCE (Nyamnjoh 1996). When the board was created without the text of application, the PCC sent another memo to the Prime Minister, thanking the government but urging it to sign the text of application as the last step towards the board's establishment.<sup>6</sup> The government signed this text, and the board, managed by Anglophone officials with headquarters in Buea, effectively came into existence in 1994.

In "Justice and Peace," a keynote address delivered by the Moderator of the church during a seminar of church leaders of FEMEC, in June 2000, the Moderator of the PCC argued that peace is not just the absence of war, but also the presence of justice. He attributed civil strife, which has engulfed most societies, to blatant social injustice, exemplified by tribalism and benign neglect of minorities, and argued that these ills cannot be allowed to continue unchallenged. Anyone versed with the anglophone problem in Cameroon will understand that as usual, such a position is directed towards the support of the course because it exposes what the Anglophones have been accusing each successive Francophone-dominated administration of doing.

In the heat of the political crisis of 1991, when Cameroonians demonstrated in favor of a plural political system, Biya tried to defuse the situation by calling a

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<sup>6</sup> For more on the GCE crisis, see Nyamnjoh 1996.

meeting of opinion leaders from around the whole country. The conference, popularly known as the *Tripartite*, was aimed at working out an electoral code for a Cameroon multi-party structure. It brought together government ministers, heads of many political parties, academics, business people, and church leaders. It was held in Yaounde in October 1991, and amongst those invited was the moderator of the PCC. In a paper presented at the conference, he started by expressing worry over the lack of peace, safety, and love in the country. He blamed the government, opposition parties and nonpoliticians alike-people who talk peace, but indulge in selfish actions that hamper the peace. He condemned the wanton killings of peaceful demonstrators by the forces of law and order, and prayed that the atmosphere during the discussion should be frank, and that the government and the opposition should adopt a give-and-take attitude. He joined the opposition parties in advocating the creation of an independent electoral commission, if free and fair elections were to be expected. He argued that an independent electoral commission, functioning under a well-drawn electoral code, would boost efforts to bring peaceful coexistence among Cameroonians.

In December 1991, President Biya announced legislative elections for 1 March 1992. The timing of the elections generated controversy. Many political parties and a cross section of Cameroonians felt that a more acceptable election code ought to have been drawn up before the elections. Many thought the time given for the necessary formalities to be fulfilled by the participating parties was inadequate. Many groups and independent leaders appealed, requesting Biya to reconsider the date and extend the time: however, he did not heed these calls and the elections were held as scheduled. Many political parties boycotted the elections. The PCC was among the groups that expressed much worry about elections. It faxed a message to president Biya, appealing for a postponement of the elections to avert a political uprising. Amongst the reasons it advanced for the postponement of the elections were that there was yet no generally acceptable electoral code, the time was so short for political parties, even the CPDM party, to prepare efficiently for the elections, and the number of political parties participating was less than those abstaining-which made it unhealthy for the desired peaceful evolution of the country.

On 25 August 1992, after these elections, Biya announced that a precipitated presidential election would occur on 11 October of that year. This election was obviously more important, and despite protests against the electoral code, a majority of the parties decided to join in the race, either as independent parties, or aligning with bigger parties to present a single candidate. Six candidates, including the incumbent, entered the race. The campaign was nasty and bitter, and it tore Cameroonians apart. In a pastoral letter "Your Christian Conscience and the Presidential Election," the PCC formalized its response. The Church

leaders expressed worry that the election would take place without an electoral code that was acceptable to all political parties involved, and they wondered whether six weeks was enough time to set the electoral machinery in place. They expressed concern on the controversial issue of the constitution, and argued that Cameroonians deserved the right to determine what form of government they wanted and what kind of presidency they needed. Since everybody was already prepared for the election despite these shortcomings, the church leaders advised Cameroonians to use their ballot responsibly: they urged everyone to vote for the candidate believed to have the qualities of leadership as outlined in the Bible. They urged those who had been charged with the responsibility of organizing the election to ensure that voting would be free and fair, so that at the end, the winner could win magnanimously and the losers lose graciously. They appealed to all the political parties to abide by a civilized code of conduct by ensuring that nobody would exploit the situation to cause violence or interfere with anybody's rights.

This election was one of the most controversial in the history of Cameroon. An openly skeptical but complaint Supreme Court declared Biya (the CPDM candidate) winner by 39 percent, followed by Fru Ndi (the SDF candidate) with 36 percent, but it was widely believed that John Fru Ndi had received more votes. The irregularities were so glaring that the Washington-based National Democratic Institute, which had observed the election, reported that the electoral process made it impossible to determine which candidate would have been the winner in a fair election: "The election was designed to fail and while several parties were responsible for election irregularities, the overwhelming weight of responsibility for the failed process lies with the government and President Paul Biya." The report concluded that like the March legislative election, that election would continue to block, rather than resolve, Cameroon's democratization struggles (Fombad and Fonyam 2004; Takougang and Krieger 1998). The results were rejected by the SDF, which immediately declared its candidate the winner. General dissatisfaction with the official results led to rioting and destruction of the property of CPDM stalwarts in many parts of the country. This response was so serious in the North West Province that the government imposed a three-month state of emergency, during which that had been sent there violently suppressed protests and committed several human-rights violations. Fru Ndi was placed under house arrest in his Bamenda residence. Western governments, including the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany, imposed sanctions against the Biya regime.

The socio-political atmosphere in Cameroon after these elections was so tense that in March 1993, the Synod Committee of the church met to address current issues. The committee lamented the continuously deteriorating state of the

national economy, which had pushed a majority of Cameroonians into misery and poverty, while a few lived in opulence. It attributed the problem to the lack of transparency in the state machinery, which had accelerated poor accountability, embezzlement and capital flight.<sup>7</sup> It appealed to the government to cut funding across the board so that the cost of goods and services could be reduced. It lamented the insecurity in the country, and urged the government to improve the state of security. It recalled the last presidential election, which, it argued, had left Cameroonians more divided than united. It expressed worry that the political stalemate, if it went unchecked, could lead to a dangerous polarization. It called on President Biya to announce a realistic timetable for addressing issues of dialogue, reconciliation and justice. It advocated the establishment of an independent judiciary, new media, and national electoral codes. It reviewed the situation of human rights, and took note of arbitrary arrest, obstruction, and shooting of peaceful demonstrators, detentions without trial, beatings, and torture. It expressed distress that those who had violated the laws the most were those who had been expected to uphold it, and urged the government and people to take appropriate steps to reverse this human-rights record so that the dignity of the individuals could be upheld and the life and property of every citizen could be protected.

The government and some of its supporters have always interpreted the PCC's criticisms of the democratic process as siding with the opposition political forces. Despite this, the church, has so far not felt repercussions from progovernment dissident groups. The economic crisis probably accounts for this: Most people blame the crisis on governmental economic mismanagement and the political stalemate that stems from the government's reluctance to introduce genuine democratic reforms (Jua 1991; Konings 1996). The church has been addressing these issues with the support of a vast majority of Cameroonians, and the pressure it continuously places on the government for a solution to the anglophone problem gives it strong support.

## The Roman Catholic Church and the democratic process

Before the abrogation of the 1962 antsubversion decree, the prelates of the Roman Catholic Church were among the few citizens who publicly criticized the state. The Ndongmo affair was the first remarkable criticism by any Christian leader in the history of the country. Like their counterparts in the PCC, they have addressed many sociopolitical issues through sermons, press interviews, and letters signed by the bishops of the country or an ecclesiastical province. National

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<sup>7</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the causes of the economic crisis in Cameroon, see Jua 1991; Konings 1996.

episcopal or ecclesiastical province conferences are frequently held, and each focuses on a topic- for example, corruption, economic crisis, tribalism, justice, peace, good governance -that affects Cameroonians. At the end of every meeting, the position of the RCC or the ecclesiastic province is released. For instance, in 1977, the bishops of the ecclesiastical province of Bamenda issued a release on "corruption"; in 1980, those of Garoua also did so; in 2000, the national Episcopal meeting dwelt on the same theme, at the end of which the bishops issued a release. In 1990, the national Episcopal conference issued a letter on the economic crisis. In 1996, the conference issued a letter on tribalism, which the bishops believed to be increasing. In 1997, they issued a letter on justice and peace. In 1998, they released a letter on good governance because, like the PCC, the RCC believed that the political and economic stalemates in the country had resulted from bad governance. In 2003, their release was on the electoral process. In addition to these announcements, individual prelates, particularly the Anglophones (probably because of their sensitivity to the marginalization of the Anglophones), have often voiced their concern on such issues. In all these cases, the prelates have espoused various aspects of liberation theology, which call for the church to combine preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments with a deep commitment to social justice. They argue that the Bible should be read from the perspective of the masses, and sin should be understood, not only in personal, but also in institutional terms. Unjust political and social structures are as sinful as personally failing to observe a biblical commandment. The church, they argue in an episcopal letter of 17 May 1990, must announce in word and action an integral form of salvation, or liberation, from all manifestations of sin, and not merely offer individuals the means of personal salvation through the sacraments.

In the Episcopal letter of January 1988, the prelates argued that political involvement is a biblical obligation for every Christian. In espousing such a theology before the parliamentary elections of that year, they appealed to Christians to vote. They hold that when Christians vote in compliance with the gospel, the right people- the ones capable of eradicating social ills- are voted to power. Corruption is eating deep into the fabric of the Cameroonian society, and this is one of the ills that the bishops, like the PCC leaders, have on several occasions addressed. The rate of corruption in the country has been documented in journals and local newspapers and confirmed by Transparency International, a German nongovernmental organization, which monitors levels of corruption around the world. Twice, in 1998 and in 1999, this organization rated Cameroon

as the most corrupt of ninety-nine countries surveyed.<sup>8</sup> When the reputation of the country on corruption was exposed to the international community, the Biya administration, which is often accused of being at the center of it, decided to create an anticorruption commission, headed by the country's Prime Minister, to fight corruption in all ministerial departments. Biya himself has on several occasions through his speeches made a solemn pledge to eradicate corruption, but analysts believe that these measures are a smokescreen to please international financial donors, who have often insisted on its eradication as a precondition for giving assistance, and to lure foreign investors. Many top civil servants, members of Biya's ethnic group (the Beti), and CPDM militants have often been involved in corrupt practices, and nothing is done to them because they are close to Biya, giving credence to the argument that there is official complicity in the act. The pledges made to eradicate corruption are hardly translated into concrete actions, as the practice persists. For instance, when any new minister of finance is appointed, he pledges to eradicate the notorious 30-percent kickbacks that treasury officials demand from contractors before settling their bills. More often than not, the minister's fight against the 30 percent consists of making public statements that instructions have been handed down to treasury officials to stop collecting these kickbacks. In its editorial on this issue, the *post* of 3 June 2005 argues that the fact that this pledge is always made indicates that the practice is more or less institutionalized. Incongruously, the paper argues that "after all, in Cameroon, a good promise is one that has not been kept and so the '30%' continues to live". The paper argues that the 30 percent precision is rather suspicious. It asks why 30 percent? It could have been 25 percent, or even 35 percent. But it is always 30 percent. "The '30%' decision must have come from very high quarters; from people who have records of all bills that are being settled by the state treasury all over the country" (*post* 3 June 3, 2005).

The Roman Catholic Church has addressed corruption on several occasions. In 1977, the Bishops of the ecclesiastical province of Bamenda first expressed concern over it: They issued a letter intended to draw attention to it. Three years after, those of Garoua did it. In the two letters, the Bishops linked corruption in the country to official complicity. In September 2000, the Bishops of the country issued a letter arguing that the economic problems facing the country were compounded by the dishonesty of corrupt government officials, who, in connivance with domestic or foreign interests, were diverting national resources for their own profit and transferring public funds to private accounts in foreign banks.

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<sup>8</sup> See the Transparency International report for these years. The report for the following year ranked Cameroon second, and the subsequent one ranked it seventh. Despite the improvement, this ranking does not auger well for the country and those in authority.

Another area that has worried the Bishops and on which they have taken a stance is the country's economy. On 17 May 1990, they issued "The economic crisis which the Country is undergoing," a pastoral letter presenting the crisis as an evil stemming from every person's sin, characterized by hatred-hatred that destroys families, divides villages and cities, and set ethnic groups at odds with each other, resulting in tribalism and a lack of solidarity. The bishops saw embezzlement, corruption, lack of civic responsibility, and capital flight-all of which have been argued to be the root causes of the crisis-as the results of the hatred that Cameroonians felt towards their country. The bishops argued that this hatred had been aggravated by authorities who cared little for the common good and had made democracy a mere a slogan. They accused the authorities of stifling democracy in the country through censorship. In apparent reference to Biya's associates and the ruling CPDM party, they affirmed that no social group has the right to assume the role of single guide in any society, because that breeds discontent in other groups. This document, praised by the privately owned media and the opposition, was criticized lengthily over the CRTV and in the *Cameroon Tribune*, whose journalists, with the government's connivance, expressed indignation that the bishops were addressing matters that were not their concern.

In their Episcopal letters of 1997, on "Justice and Peace" and that of 1998, on "Good Governance," the bishops raised the issues of the concentration of executive power and the lack of judiciary independence. Critics of the political system in Cameroon argue that too much power is concentrated in the hands of the executive, weakening the administration, the legislature and the judiciary; they argue that these arms of government function improperly because the executive intervenes too frequently. The bishops argued that a nonindependent judicial system cannot fight corruption, especially corruption involving highly placed officials. They advocated a judicial system that can function freely without the intervention from the executive, and asked the state to take great care of the moral integrity of those who administer justice. With persistent elections malpractices in the country since the institution of multiparty democracy, the bishops, in their 2003 conference, called for a complete overhaul of the electoral process.<sup>9</sup> They stated that the church stood for an independent electoral commission, in which all political parties would participate freely and fairly. They expressed concern that Cameroon has no such structure. In an interview with the *Post*, the president of the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon, Bishop Cornelius Esua (an Anglophone) argued that Cameroon could not claim to have an independent electoral commission when the divisional officers and provincial governors were those who would organize elections. The Bishop

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<sup>9</sup> For more on electoral malpractices, see Nyamnjoh 2002.

lambasted the National Election Observatory, and argued that it must serve the interests of ruling regime.

In the same conference, the bishops expressed concern over the manner in which the government was managing the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Funds, which Cameroon is a beneficiary.<sup>10</sup> For want of transparency, they called on the government to involve the church in the managing this fund, and in accordance with the principles of the fund, they asked the government to fully involve the civil society in implementing projects from the fund. The bishops made this call amid allegations that top government officials were embezzling money from the fund.

The most outspoken anglophone bishops on issues of public concern have been Paul Verdzekov (Archbishop of Bamenda) and Christian Cardinal Tumi (Archbishop of Douala). In 1992, while the state of emergency was being enforced in the North West province and as soon as Che Ngwa Ghandi, a civilian, had been tortured to death in police custody, Verdzekov issued a pastoral letter denouncing the torturers, and a few days later repeated his charges on Radio France Internationale. For this outspokenness, the state accused him of supporting the SDF party.<sup>11</sup>

Because Cardinal Tumi ranked at the top of the hierarchy of the church and was the only cardinal in the country, his comments on public issues receive much publicity. Considered the moral authority, he has never relented in speaking out on public issues. When other countries were holding national conferences, chaired in most cases by Catholic bishops, expectation was high that Cameroon would have such a conference, and it was believed that Cardinal Tumi would chair it.<sup>12</sup> In Yaounde in June 1990 he gave a press conference in which he answered questions on a wide range of public issues. In *Jeune Afrique Economie* in the same year, he gave a celebrated interview, in which he again addressed a wide range of public issues.<sup>15</sup> Three years later, he did it for *The Herald* newspaper (October 31-2 and November, 1994). Before the Presidential election of October 1992, he issued a pastoral letter, "To all Christians and Men of Good Will," in which he highlighted the obligations of a Christian toward elections. In October 1994, he was summoned to the presidential palace for an hour's meeting with President Paul Biya. This was the first item on TV news that evening, and was the main headline of most newspapers the following day.

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<sup>10</sup> Cameroon applied for and was granted the status of a heavily indebted poor country. For more on the program in Cameroon, see Tamba 2001.

<sup>11</sup> The Social Democratic Front, no doubt the strongest opposition party in Cameroon, is popularly believed to have been the winner of the presidential election of 1992, in which official sources declared Paul Biya the winner.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Gifford 1995.



In 2000, when the government stationed military personnel (known as Commandement operationnel) in Douala to fight a local crime wave, there were persistent allegations that these forces were arresting and torturing to death many innocent people. After the BBC, Radio France Internationale, and other international media had persistently reported on the discovery of mass graves where such people had been buried, Cardinal Tumi wrote to the Governor of the Littoral province and denounced the killings. He soon gave another celebrated interview to *Jeune Afrique Economie*, one in which he again addressed the killings and discussed other national problems. In response to this interview and in defense of the government, the minister of the interior published an open letter to him, a letter in which he accused the prelate of lying, being antipatriotic, wanting to stand for presidential election, supporting thieves and armed robbers, violating the principle of the separation of the state and the church, having little respect for those who govern Cameroon, questioning the electoral process, not being humble, being tribalistic, and so on. In response, the cardinal published an open letter, in which he defended himself against all the accusations<sup>17</sup> and he then published an open letter to thieves and highway robbers of Douala to counter rumor that he was supporting them.

It is obvious from these statements, interviews, sermons, press releases, and pastoral letters that in the past decade, these churches have, increased their involvement in politics. In addition to being guided by their pastoral mission of spreading the gospel, they have adopted the precepts of liberation. They have therefore come into conflict with a government that is apparently unwilling to introduce genuine democratic reform. The PCC, in particular, has been articulating the concerns of the Anglophone community, largely because, contrary to the RCC, it is a church managed entirely by the Anglophones, and therefore its leaders articulate the preoccupations of the members. Though the RCC is national in character, it is unrealistic, given the history of Cameroon, for the bishops to speak in unison on national political issues. Unlike the PCC clergies, who speak in unison on any political action, some bishops in Cameroon may as individuals identify with their regional interest.

The bishops of Biya's Beti ethnic group are regarded as sympathetic to the regime because of their ethnic affiliation. One attended minor seminary with Biya, but all have links of patronage with him. For instance, when he was proclaimed the winner of the 2004 presidential election (an election marred with irregularities in favour of Biya),<sup>13</sup> Cardinal Tumi quickly declared in an interview with Radio Equinox (a private radio station in Douala) that the election was not free and fair, but the Archbishop of Yaounde, Victor Tonye Bakot, then president of the Cameroon Episcopal Conference, immediately used the national

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Maguire.

radio station to contradict him by claiming that the result reflected Cameroonians' aspirations. None of these prelates claimed to have spoken on behalf of the church. Archbishop Bakot's position, no doubt, reflected his regional interest; moreover, he preferred the national radio- which is frequently used by the regime to project Biya as the best leader- to make his point because he was sure of the publicity the journalists of this station would make of it. The late Archbishop of Yaounde, Jean Zoa, also of the Beti ethnic group, was considered sympathetic with the regime, but had established some independence. (He collapsed and died of a heart problem while officiating at the funeral of another bishop in the Yaounde Cathedral on 20 March 1998.) In April 1990, while CPDM militants were protesting the call by the opposition forces for the introduction of multiparty politics, he organized in his cathedral a Christian worship service aimed at dissuading Cameroonians from supporting multiparty politics. During the service, he blasted the call for multiparty politics, and accused its advocates as people who wanted to "destabilize" the peace under Biya's leadership. When six people were shot in Bamenda during the launching of the SDF party, Archbishop Verdzekov organized a memorial service in the Bamenda Cathedral in honor of these people. Zoa reacted by organizing in Yaounde a counter service, which, he argued, was to "cleanse the image of the Catholic church from the unholy service", organized by his colleague in Bamenda. In 1996, Zoa started denouncing the regime he had been supporting. In sermons in Yaounde (for instance, 10 October 1996 and 24 August 1997) and in the media, he blamed the regime for indulging in corruption, being unwilling to democratize the political scene, and causing economic hardship and social insecurity (*The Herald* August 25-27, 1997; *CAMNET archives* May, 2005).

Both the PCC and RCC are making their positions known on important issues of concern to Cameroonians, and they are using liberation theology as a strategy to foster social justice. In Latin America, unlike in Cameroon, liberation theology was associated with the officials of the Roman Catholic Church only-people committed to the liberation of their people even without the Vatican's approval (Gutierrez 1977). Unlike in Latin America, it would seem though the Roman Catholic priests in Cameroon may be interested in liberating Cameroonians, they would want to do so in the pace dictated by the Vatican. For instance, it was rumored that Cardinal Christian Tumi was to present his candidature for the presidential election of 2004. Many Cameroonians, including newspapers, which carried it as the banner story, welcomed the idea because of his undoubted moral authority, relentless effort in fighting for social justice, and long standing efforts to expose social and governmental ills. But in several interviews, the archbishop made it clear that though he, as a Cameroonian, is eligible to run, as a Roman Catholic priest, he can only do so with the Vatican's approval (*L'effort*

*Camerounaise* 1-14 October 2003; interview with CRTV journalist during the Garoua Episcopal conference of January, 2004).

## Conclusion

In this paper, we have shown how the mainline churches in Cameroon—the PCC and the RCC—have played significant roles in ongoing political and social transformations. They have done so through Pastoral Letters, episcopal Conferences, and interviews in church-owned newsletters and the private press. Their criticisms of the managers of state affairs have drawn sharp responses from several government quarters, some of who consider the clergy's actions unpatriotic. It is therefore unsurprising that relations between the state and these churches have been strained. Like many other agents of civil society in Cameroon, the church is taking advantage of recent political and social liberalization to influence important national issues. This new strength of religion in the political landscape reflects historical and transnational sources that continue to affect local realities, such as the mass media and transcontinental migrations.

The growth and spread of revival movements within churches from Nigeria is widely acknowledged (Akoko 2002). Revival movements almost led to a schism in the RCC, a rift exploited by political elites who interpreted it along the lines of the autochthony-allochthony conflict, thereby extending the politics of exclusion from the socioeconomic and political domain to the religious domain (Awasom 2001; Konings 2003b). This result could only have diminished the role of the church in fostering social justice. Mismanagement and a leadership tussle within the RCC and the blatant neglect of the principles of rational management are important drawbacks to such efforts (Gifford 1997: 262). The explicit recognition of geoethnic cleavages within the PCC is equally an important handicap. The PCC constitution clearly states that if the moderator of the church comes from the North West province, the Synod Clerk should come from the South West province and vice versa, thereby recognizing regional cleavages.

Despite these shortcomings, it is clear that actions undertaken by the PCC and the RCC have helped create political and social awareness in Cameroonians (Takougang and Krieger 1998). As long as the government does not engage in reforms designed to improve the lives of Cameroonians, relations between the church and the state may continued to deteriorate. The recent Episcopal letter intended to draw government attention to the poor management of funds meant to alleviate Cameroonians' economic plight illustrates this tension.

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## Summary

### “Ask and you shall be given”: Pentecostalism and the economic crisis in Cameroon

Since the mid eighties, Cameroon has been hit by a protracted economic crisis, leading to widespread unemployment and severe poverty. Surprisingly, the existing literature on this period seems to have completely overlooked the role of a growing number of Pentecostal churches, especially in Anglophone Cameroon, which appear to offer an attractive message of salvation to the suffering masses. These churches have gradually shifted their doctrine from asceticism to a gospel of prosperity. The proliferation of Pentecostalism has also had an enormous impact on the mainline churches. One can observe not only a continuous defection of their members to Pentecostal groups, but also a gradual pentecostalization of these churches. Another remarkable development in the country since 1990 has been increasing pressure on the government to introduce genuine democratic reforms. Civil society organizations in Cameroon, including the churches, tend to believe that bad governance is at the root of the economic crisis in the country. For this reason, they call for the introduction of democratic institutions as a necessary precondition for overcoming the economic crisis.

Against this background of a rapid growth of Pentecostal churches during the economic crisis, my study aimed at providing answers to the following questions:

- 1) What answer has Pentecostalism provided to the material predicaments of Cameroonians? More in particular: how does the new gospel of accumulation and prosperity relate to these everyday predicaments?
- 2) What accounts for the proliferation of Pentecostal groupings and why is there continuous defection of members of the mainline churches to such Pentecostal groups in the country?
- 3) What factor(s) can account for the increasing pentecostalization of the mainline Churches?
- 4) How do the Pentecostal churches relate to the democratization impasse in Cameroon?

Taking into consideration the difficulties of covering the entire country, the study was carried out in Southwest Cameroon between 2001 and 2006. Field-

work was carried out in three phases: phase one (October 2001-July 2002), phase two (April 2003-March 2004), phase three (July 2004-June 2006).

Starting from the objectives of the study, I distinguished four major subjects on which I had to collect data. These were Pentecostalism, economic crisis, pentecostalization of mainline Christian churches, and democratization. Because of the specificity of each problem, I used a variety of anthropological methods, including participant observation, interviews, newspaper sources, government documents, and historical and scholarly sources.

I have tried to find answers to my main questions in five different but related studies. These studies have already been published elsewhere, but have been reproduced in this book. However, I have expanded some of these studies by adding some more case studies with a view to further enrich the texts, especially in ethnographical respect.

The study comprises six chapters. Chapter 1 provides a general introduction which starts explaining the central theme in this book: the shift in Pentecostalism from asceticism to accumulation. It then briefly discusses the role of Pentecostalism during the economic crisis and political liberalization and introduces the main questions in this book. Subsequently, it provides a critical review of the works of some renowned scholars of Pentecostalism in Africa and shows the relevance of my own contribution to the general debate on the role of Pentecostalism on the African continent. For instance, my own work on the political role of Pentecostal churches comes to conclusions that seem to differ from those of other scholars. Studies by Maxwell on Zimbabwe and Gifford on Zambia claim that Pentecostal churches tend to support the ruling regimes, while studies by Marshall-Fratani on Nigeria and Van Dijk on Ghana rather come to the opposite conclusion: Pentecostal churches tend to be critical of the ruling regimes. In sharp contrast to these studies, I show that most Pentecostal churches in Cameroon simply refuse getting involved in political issues and debates. This is all the more striking because the Cameroonian mainline churches have been making their voices clear on political issues through pastoral letters, sermons and press interviews. The chapter ends up with outlining the contents of the book and describing the methods used to collect the data.

Chapter 2 sets out to explain the appeal of the Pentecostal economic message evidenced by its rapid spread and the growing conversion of members of the mainline churches to Pentecostal beliefs. It argues that the economic crisis affecting the country has played a major role in this development. It shows that new Pentecostal groups are propagating a gospel of prosperity as opposed to the ascetic doctrine of the mainline Pentecostal groups. This message tends to be perceived by a growing number of believers as a solution to their problems during the economic crisis. Evidence is provided that the mainline Pentecostal

groups are also increasingly inclined to adopt the gospel of prosperity. The chapter also shows that many people feel attracted to the Pentecostal churches because of the whole range of economic opportunities they offer during the economic crisis. Some Pentecostal churches have created large projects and establishments such as schools, hospitals and banks. They offer employment opportunities to church members only. That is why many unemployed people tend to join these churches.

Chapter 3 narrows this argument to one specific Pentecostal church. It uses Full Gospel Mission as an example to show that mainline Pentecostal churches are gradually moving away from asceticism to the prosperity gospel not only to attract more people but also to raise more money for their activities. Membership in this group is shown to have increased within the last decade and the church is expanding to all parts of the country and beyond. Switching to a new doctrinal position is a crucial decision in the life of a church since such a switch can either unite or divide it. My study demonstrates that this transition has actually occurred smoothly. The church originally adhered to asceticism as an economic message, but it has gradually adopted the prosperity gospel during the period of the economic crisis in Cameroon. This is manifest in its growing involvement in business ventures so as to raise money for its activities. Apart from providing funds to the church, these businesses have created employment opportunities to the unemployed. It encourages its members to engage in business ventures, claiming that the secret of business success lies in heeding to the gospel of prosperity. Despite this claim, my research clearly showed that not all aspirant businessmen did get rich. Those who failed in their entrepreneurial activities usually argued that the 'devil' was blocking their way to success. They stressed that the 'devil' made people suffer so that they turn away from God and follow him. Despite their current poverty, however, they still remained optimistic that they would eventually succeed, trusting that God will rescue his children from the hands of the 'devil'.

Chapter 4 examines whether the reactions to the economic crisis of the Pentecostal churches in general and the Full Gospel Mission in particular are different from that of the mainline churches, especially the Roman Catholic Church.. My study paid particular attention to the question why the two churches have become even more pre-occupied during the economic crisis with reducing poverty among its members. Given that both churches are becoming self-financing, contributions from members make up a sizeable source of their income. Unfortunately, many people found it hard to provide financial support to the churches during the economic crisis. This has created a reciprocal relationship in which the churches try to alleviate poverty among their members while the latter are supposed to provide the necessary finances for the running of

their churches. For this purpose, each church has created various enterprises, which offer employment to its members. In addition, each church has adopted training projects that help their members to become self-employed during the economic crisis. For instance, the chapter shows that the women's departments of each church are engaged in training women for self-employment during the current economic recession.

Chapter 5 highlights the current process of pentecostalization of the mainline churches. The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) case is of particular interest because pentecostalization of this church seems to come from below. The chapter attempts to answer the following questions: why were PCC members eager to imitate Pentecostalism and why did the church authorities recently open up to Pentecostal practices after having resisted earlier attempts of pentecostalization. Two factors seem to be of central importance to explain the process of pentecostalization of mainline churches. The first is the influence of Nigerian Pentecostalism. Most of the Pentecostal groups in Cameroon, particularly in the Anglophone region, originate from Nigeria. This makes the Pentecostal scene in this part of Cameroon almost a replica of what happens in Nigeria. A second factor is that the economic crisis has made medical healthcare very expensive for the great majority of Cameroonians, forcing some of them to turn to spiritual healing. Rather than turning to Pentecostal groups, members of mainline churches prefer to adopt pentecostal healing methods. My main conclusion in this chapter is that the authorities of the church have learnt from the past to tolerate a certain measure of pentecostalization from below so as to avoid further defection to Pentecostal groups.

Chapter 6 examines the roles played by mainline Christianity and Pentecostal groups in the ongoing democratization process in Cameroon. Taking the examples of the Roman Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, it shows that these mainline churches have been constantly fighting for the introduction of democratic institutions. Government officials have severely condemned their repeated criticisms of the corrupt and authoritarian regime as being unpatriotic. Little wonder that relations between the state and these churches became strained. Like many other agents of civil society in Cameroon, the church has been taking advantage of recent political and social liberalization to take a stand on important national issues. In sharp contrast to Pentecostal churches in some other parts of Africa, Pentecostal groups in Cameroon appear to have played only a minor role in the political liberalization process in the country.

## Samenvatting

### “Vraag en gij zult ontvangen” (Ask and you shall be given): De Pinksterkerken en de economische crisis in Kameroen

Sinds halverwege de jaren tachtig wordt Kameroen geteisterd door een aanhoudende economische crisis die heeft geresulteerd in massale werkeloosheid en diepe armoede. Merkwaardig genoeg blijkt in de voorhandene literatuur over deze periode de rol van een groeiend aantal Pinksterkerken die een positieve economische boodschap blijken te hebben voor de lijdende massa, te zijn onderbelicht. Deze kerkgemeenschappen hebben geleidelijk hun doctrine van ascetisme opgeschoven naar een soort evangelie van welvaart. De snelle groei van deze Pinksterbeweging heeft ook een enorme impact gehad op de grotere, gevestigde kerken. Niet alleen is er een gestage overloop van hun leden naar Pinksterkerken waar te nemen, deze kerken beginnen geleidelijk aan soms ook zelf op Pinkstergemeenten te lijken.

Een andere belangrijke ontwikkeling in het land sinds 1990 is de groeiende druk op de regering om echte democratische hervormingen in te voeren. Maatschappelijke organisaties in Kameroen, inclusief de kerken, neigen er meer en meer toe om aan te nemen dat de wortel van de economische crisis in hun land ligt aan het slechte landsbestuur. Vandaar de roep om de invoering van democratische instellingen als noodzakelijke voorwaarde om de economische crisis te boven te komen.

Tegen de achtergrond van de snelle groei van de Pinksterkerken gedurende de economische crisis tracht ik met mijn onderzoek antwoorden te vinden op de volgende vragen:

- 1). Welk antwoord heeft de Pinksterbeweging op de wens naar leniging van materiële noden van de Kameroeners? In het bijzonder: hoe verhoudt zich het nieuwe evangelie van accumulatie en welvaart tot de dagelijkse noden?
- 2) Wat zijn de oorzaken van de groei van de Pinksterkerken en van de gestage overloop van leden van de grotere kerken naar deze kerkgemeenten?

- 3) Welke factoren spelen een rol in de groeiende neiging van de grotere kerken om zelf op Pinkstergemeenten te lijken?
- 4) Hoe verhouden de Pinksterkerken zich tot de democratiseringsimpasse in Kameroen?

Aangezien het ondoenlijk was om deze problematiek over het gehele land te bestuderen, is de voorliggende studie van 2001 tot 2006 geconcentreerd op Zuidwest-Kameroen. Het veldwerk werd uitgevoerd in drie fasen: (1) van oktober 2001 – juli 2002; (2) van april 2004 tot maart 2004; en (3) van juli 2004 tot juni 2006. Er boden zich vier hoofdonderwerpen waarvoor data moesten worden verzameld: de Pinksterkerken, de economische crisis, de ‘pinksterisering’ (pentecostalization) van grotere Christelijke kerken, en de democratisering. Vanwege het specifieke karakter van de diverse vraagstellingen heb ik verschillende antropologische methodieken gebruikt, o.a. participerende observatie, interviews, journalistieke bronnen (kranten), regeringsdocumenten en historische en wetenschappelijke bronnen. Ik heb getracht om op de belangrijkste vragen antwoorden te vinden in vijf verschillende, maar onderling verwante studies. Een deel van deze studies was elders al eerder gepubliceerd, maar wordt in dit boek opnieuw aangehaald, zij het uitvoeriger door toevoeging van aanvullende case studies, ter verrijking van de tekst, voornamelijk in etnografisch opzicht.

Deze studie is ingedeeld in zes hoofdstukken. Hoofdstuk 1 geeft een algemene inleiding met de beschrijving van het centrale thema van dit boek: de verschuiving binnen de Pinksterbeweging van asceticisme naar accumulatie. Daarna wordt kort de rol van de Pinksterbeweging gedurende de economische crisis en de politieke liberalisatie beschreven, en worden de voornaamste vraagstellingen geïntroduceerd. Vervolgens worden de studies van enkele bekende specialisten op het gebied van het Pentecostalisme in Afrika onder de loep genomen, en probeer ik de betekenis van mijn eigen bijdrage aan de discussie over het onderwerp aan te tonen. Zo kom ik bijvoorbeeld in mijn studie over the politieke rol van Pinksterkerken tot andere conclusies dan een aantal andere onderzoekers. Studies van Maxwell (over Zimbabwe) en Gifford (over Zambia) beweren dat Pinksterkerken er toe neigen om de heersende regimes te steunen, terwijl Marshall-Fratani betreffende Nigeria en Van Dijk betreffende Ghana tot de omgekeerde conclusie komen, namelijk dat Pinksterkerken juist kritisch tegen de heersende regimes aankijken. In scherpe tegenstelling daartoe laat ik zien dat de meeste Pinkstergemeenten in Kameroen gewoonweg weigeren om zich direct in het politieke debat te mengen. Dit is des te opmerkelijker omdat andere, grotere Kameroense kerken zich wel over politieke issues uitspreken, in herderlijke brieven, preken en persinterviews. Het hoofdstuk eindigt met een overzicht van de hoofdpunten van het proefschrift en met een beschrijving van de methoden die gebruikt zijn voor het verzamelen van de data.



In Hoofdstuk 2 wordt getracht om de aantrekkingskracht van de economische boodschap van de Pinksterkerken te verklaren, de daaruit voortvloeiende snelle groei van deze kerkgemeenschappen en het groeiende aantal bekeringen van leden van de grotere kerken tot hun geloof. Er wordt gesteld dat de economische crisis die het land teistert een grote rol heeft gespeeld in deze ontwikkeling. Aangetoond wordt dat vooral nieuwe Pinkstergemeenten een evangelie van welvaart propageren, in tegenstelling tot de doctrine van ascetisme van de oudere Pinksterkerken. Deze boodschap schijnt door een groeiend aantal gelovigen te worden gezien als dé oplossing voor hun problemen in deze economische crisis. Sommige Pinksterkerkgemeenten hebben bovendien grote projecten opgezet, met scholen, ziekenhuizen en banken waar alleen kerkleden een aanstelling kunnen krijgen, wat er toe bijdraagt dat veel werkelozen graag tot deze kerken toetreden.

In Hoofdstuk 3 ligt de focus op de argumentatie die door één specifieke Pinksterkerkgemeenschap, de ‘Full Gospel Mission’, wordt gebruikt, als voorbeeld om aan te tonen dat ook gevestigde Pinksterkerken zich langzaam van het ascetisme afkeren en zich tot de welvaartsboodschap wenden, niet alleen om meer gelovigen aan te trekken, maar ook om hierdoor weer meer geld voor hun activiteiten te kunnen verzamelen. Het lidmaatschap bij deze groep is in de laatste tien jaar duidelijk gestegen en de gemeenschap breidt zich uit naar alle delen van het land en zelfs daarbuiten. Het overgaan naar een nieuwe leerstelling is een cruciaal besluit in het bestaan van een kerk, het kan de gemeente nauwer samenbinden, maar evengoed ook splijten. Mijn onderzoek toont aan dat in dit geval de transitie soepel is verlopen. Deze kerk had eerst ascetisme als economische boodschap, maar heeft gedurende de economische crisis in Kameroen geleidelijk aan het welvaartsevangelie geadopteerd. Dit manifesteert zich in haar groeiende betrokkenheid bij zakelijke ondernemingen, om daarmee fondsen voor haar activiteiten binnen te halen, maar ook om werkgelegenheid te creëren. Zij moedigt haar leden aan om in zaken te gaan, met de stelling dat het geheim van zakelijk succes ligt in het geloof aan het welvaartsevangelie. Mijn onderzoek heeft echter uitgewezen dat ondanks deze stelling lang niet alle aspirant-zakenlieden rijk zijn geworden. Degenen die geen succes hadden in hun zakelijke ondernemingen beweerden echter doorgaans dat de ‘duivel’ hun pad naar succes blokkeerde. Zij benadrukten dat de ‘duivel’ mensen laat lijden opdat zij zich van God afkeren en zich vervolgens bij hem aansluiten. Ondanks hun huidige armoede blijven zij echter optimistisch en overtuigd dat zij uiteindelijk succes zullen hebben, in het vertrouwen dat God zijn kinderen uit handen van de ‘duivel’ zal redden.

In Hoofdstuk 4 onderzoek ik de vraag of de reacties op de economische crisis, van de Pinksterkerken in het algemeen en de ‘Full Gospel Mission’ in het bijzonder, verschillen van die van de grotere kerken, in het bijzonder die van de

Rooms-katholieke kerk. Mijn onderzoek richtte speciaal de aandacht op de vraag waarom deze twee kerken zich gedurende de economische crisis nog meer gericht hebben op het doel om de armoede onder hun leden te bestrijden. Doordat beide kerken steeds meer zelffinancierend zijn geworden, moet een groot deel van hun inkomen uit ledencontributies komen. Echter, voor veel leden was het juist gedurende de economische crisis moeilijk om de kerk financieel te ondersteunen. Hierdoor is een soort spagaat ontstaan waarin de kerken trachten om de armoede van hun leden te bestrijden, terwijl van dezelfde leden verwacht wordt dat zij financieel meehelpen om de kerken draaiende te houden. Dit resulteerde bij beide kerken in het opzetten van diverse ondernemingen die weer werkgelegenheid bieden aan de leden. Bovendien heeft elke kerk trainingsprojecten geadopteerd die hun leden helpen om zelfstandige ondernemers te worden. Het hoofdstuk vermeldt bijvoorbeeld dat de vrouwenafdelingen van deze kerken trainingsprogramma's hebben voor vrouwen om zelfstandige ondernemers te worden ondanks de huidige economische recessie.

Hoofdstuk 5 belicht de recente ontwikkeling van 'Pinksterisering' van de grote, gevestigde kerken. Het voorbeeld van de Presbyteriaanse Kerk in Kameroen (PCC) is bijzonder opvallend omdat de 'Pinkstersering' van deze kerk van onderop lijkt te komen. In het hoofdstuk wordt getracht om volgende vragen te beantwoorden: waarom waren PCC leden zo zeer bereid om de Pinksterkerk te imiteren, en waarom hebben de kerkautoriteiten recent hieraan toegegeven, nadat ze eerdere pogingen verbeterd hadden bestreden? Twee factoren schijnen van belang te zijn in de verklaring van dit proces van Pinkstersering van grote kerken. De eerste is de invloed van de Nigeriaanse Pinksterkerken. De meeste Pinksterkerkgemeenschappen in Kameroen, vooral die in de Anglofone regio, komen oorspronkelijk uit Nigeria. Inderdaad lijkt de Pinksterkerk-scene in dit deel van Kameroen praktisch een replica van die in Nigeria. Een tweede factor is dat door de economische crisis de gezondheidszorg voor de meeste Kameroeners heel duur werd, waardoor sommigen hun toevlucht zoeken tot geloofsgenezing ('spiritual healing'). Maar in plaats van zich bij een Pinksterkerk aan te sluiten, geven sommige leden van de grotere kerken er de voorkeur aan om alleen de Pinksterkerkelijke genezingsmethoden toe te passen. Mijn hoofdconclusie in dit hoofdstuk is (daarom) dat de kerkelijke autoriteiten hebben geleerd uit het verleden, en een bepaalde mate van 'Pinksterisering' van onderaf tolereren, om verdere overloop naar de Pinksterkerken te voorkomen.

Hoofdstuk 6 onderzoekt de rol die de grote christelijke kerken in verhouding tot de Pinksterkerken spelen in het recente democratiseringsproces in Kameroen. De Rooms-katholieke kerk en de Presbyteriaanse kerk bijvoorbeeld hebben zich altijd al ingezet voor de invoering van democratische instellingen.

Regeringsinstanties hebben hun herhaalde kritiek op het corrupte en autoritaire regime altijd ten strengste veroordeeld en afgedaan als onpatriottisch, en het is daarom niet verwonderlijk dat de verhoudingen tussen de staat en deze kerken gespannen zijn. Zoals veel andere maatschappelijke instellingen in Kameroen hebben de gevestigde kerken echter de recente politieke en sociale liberalisatie aangegrepen om een duidelijk standpunt over nationale aangelegenheden in te nemen. Maar in tegenstelling tot Pinkstergemeenten in andere delen van Afrika lijken de Pinksterkerken in Kameroen slechts een ondergeschikte rol te hebben gespeeld in het politieke liberalisatieproces van hun land.

## Curriculum Vitae

Robert Mbe Akoko was born in October 1960 in Ngwo, Northwest Province of Cameroon. After pursuing primary and secondary education in Cameroon, he gained admission into the University of Ibadan, Nigeria in 1984 where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Archaeology and a Masters in African Studies (Anthropology) in 1987 and 1988, respectively. From 1989 to 1993, he taught Economics in Providence Comprehensive College and NACHO Comprehensive High School, both in Bamenda. Between 1994 and 1996 he taught Anthropology on part-time basis in the University of Buea. Within this period, he served as a teaching and research assistant for Dickinson College Pennsylvania's summer field course in Cultural Anthropology in Limbe Cameroon. In 1996, he was recruited assistant Lecturer in the University of Buea and in 2003, he was promoted to rank of Lecturer. He is currently a Lecturer in Anthropology in this University. In 2000, he obtained the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (WOTRO) scholarship to do a Ph.D in the University of Leiden under the supervision of Professor Peter Geschiere and Dr Piet Konings. In July and August 2006, he was a Visiting Fellow at the African Studies Centre Leiden where he had the opportunity to write the introduction of this book. He is a member of the *African Studies Association* (ASA) and CODESRIA-sponsored working group on *Civil Society and the Search for Development Alternatives in Cameroon*.

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