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

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## “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 Koforida 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 Kumassi, 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, Opoky 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 (Opoky, 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 diary 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 (Nghoh, 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 awakened 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 tome. 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.