

African **Pentecostalism:**

Probity and Accountability

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African Pentecostalism: Probity And Accountability

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Pastors at Work: The Antithesis of Probity and Accountability among Nigerian Pentecostal Churches

Akiti Glory Alamu

Introduction

It is an established fact that pastors or church leaders are God's mouthpiece or representatives. No doubt, they are pivotal to the entire leadership of the church. As Pastoral habitus, they organize congregation bodily and spiritually with the aim of developing church life and ensuring it follows the precepts to the end. They equally help to build and mould the Christian communities and societies where human flourishing can occur. More so, church leaders are considered as express image of God and epistles which both local and global church read by exemplifying Christ to a depraved society.

Since the church comprises the leaders and the followers, there must be checks and balance, which brings about probity and accountability which makes the church healthy. The leaders are accountable to God and to one another with the hope that there would be an organic body. However, in African or Nigerian Pentecostal churches, some Christian leaders defy financial accountability because they believe

that they are immune from misdemeanour. Leaders who put much trust in themselves cannot be trusted by others, thereby making them suspect. It is against this backdrop that this paper will examine the place of financial integrity and accountability in the Nigerian Pentecostals and the contradictions that are generally observed. The paper will therefore conclude by recommending measures to be adopted in ensuring financial integrity and accountability.

Nigerian Pentecostal Churches: A Synopsis

It was the feeling and experience that manifested in the early Christians during and after the feast of Pentecost that has triggered the phenomenon of Pentecostalism in the contemporary era. The modern Pentecostals take their name from a story recounted in Acts 2. This experience describes how the followers of the recently crucified Rabbi, they believed was the messiah gathered in Jerusalem to mark the Jewish holiday called Pentecost that occurred fifty days after Passover.¹ The Pentecostal movement in the modern form is said to have started in 1906 after about decades of preliminary preparation and desires revealed in the holiness movement and the Wesleyan doctrines of sanctification. Its peculiar characteristic was the fact that it was led by William Seymour "African-American preacher with no theological formation; its first adherents were poor domestic servants, janitors and day workers black and white who had the audacity to claim that a new Pentecost was happening, that the new Jerusalem was coming soon, and that they were its designated heralds and grateful first fruit."²

There are four leading interpretative schools of thought on the origin of Pentecostal churches in Africa, each with implication for understanding their theology and wider social impact. These four schools of thought include the following: The first school of thought believes that Pentecostalism started with William Seymour and his Azusa Street revivals in Los Angeles in 1906. The Second school of thought asserts that Pentecostalism started with American television

¹D. P. Ukpog: *Nigerian Pentecostalism; Cases, Diagnosis and Prescription* (Uyo: Fruities' Publications, 2008), 4.

²Ukpog, 5.

evangelists such as T. S. Osborn, Kenneth Haggin and Copeland. The Third school of thought believes that western Pentecostalism was transported to Africa. While the last school of thought strongly believes that Pentecostalism is African re-imagination of Christianity addressing African concerns with different periodization. Ogbu Kalu, Afe Adogame and Deji Ayegboyin. However, only two relevant schools of thought shall be considered here. One school of thought represented by Paul Gifford³ sees African Pentecostal churches as a replication or derivative product of western Pentecostalism – more precisely, the sort of Pentecostalism associated with American television evangelist and conservative Christianity. A related argument acknowledges the black holiness preacher William Seymour and his Azusa street revivals (in Los Angeles) as the starting point of the modern day Pentecostalism in the early 20th century. Hollenweger stresses further that Pentecostalism's breath-taking growth does not lie in a particular Pentecostal doctrine in spite of what Pentecostals think, the reasons for its growth lie in its black roots.⁴

The second school of thought with more convincing interpretation finds in African Pentecostal churches a new chapter in the African re-imagination of Christianity addressing concerns on African terms in a manner similar to the African Indigenous Churches. Along this line, Ogbu Kalu⁵ indicates that the Pentecostal churches are part of a continuing and indigenous effort that follows on the failure of the missionary churches. They are not, in this historical evaluation, following the line of Azusa but have developed independently to meet their own requirement.⁶

The phenomenon of Pentecostalism in contemporary Nigeria is not new. Ogbu Kalu argues that the emergence of Pentecostalism in Africa perhaps Nigeria could be dated back to the establishment of African

³Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004, 66.

⁴W. Hollenwenger, "The Black Roots of Pentecostalism" in W. Hollenwenger (ed) *Pentecostals after a Century*, Sheffield: (Sheffield academic press 1999, 36.

⁵O. U. Kalu, "The Third Response: Pentecostalism and the reconstruction of Christian Experience in Africa 1970-1995," *Journal of African Christian Thought* 12 (1998): 36.

⁶M. R. Gornik, *Word Made Global: Stories of African Christianity in New York City, Grand Rapids: (W.B Eerdmans Publishing co. 2011), 33.*

Indigenous Churches (AICS) between 1914 and 1947. These include the Christ Army Church, 1918; Cherubim and Seraphim 1925; Christ Apostolic Church 1930; the Church of the Lord, Aladura 1947; the Celestial Church of Christ 1947 among others.⁷ Christianity is a salvation faith for African believers alongside belief in Monotheistic God the Creator, Jesus the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit. If such experience is central to African Christianity, it is not at odds with holding strong theological beliefs.⁸ Isiramen opines that these churches exhibit elements found among Pentecostals such as healing, miracles, speaking in strange tongues, prophecy visions and dream.⁹ Thus, African Indigenous Churches possess vibrant contextual theology, local liturgy and lived experience that are central to life in these churches. Daneel maintains that the Independent churches are a constructive reinterpretation of Christianity in African terms.¹⁰

Adogame clearly emphasizes the correct strands of African Independent Churches. He posits that they share many features and common typology, but each Aladura has its own religious dynamics.¹¹ There are significant differences, especially in specific doctrines and details of ritual acts and performance, the charismatic personality of the founders, their organizational policies and foundation histories. Overall, the African Independent Churches emphasize the experience of the spirit, healing, testimony and a rejection of western modes of worship as imported by the missionaries.¹²

Be that as it may, many Pentecostal churches are diametrically opposed and vehemently disagreed with this truth. Most of these churches believe that Pentecostal and charismatic churches sprang up in the seventies. Neo-Pentecostals came into Africa through some

⁷Kalu 36.

⁸Gornik, 34.

⁹Isiramen, C. O. "Pentecostalism and the Nigerian Socio – Economic Debacle: A therapy or a Delusion" in C.O Isiramen. et. al. (eds.) *Religion and the Nigerian Nation: some Topical Issues*(Ibadan: En-Joy Press & Books 2010), 307.

¹⁰M. L. Daneel, *Quest for Belonging: Introduction to a study of African Independent Churches*(Zimbabwe: Mambo Press 1987), 65.

¹¹Afe Adogame, "Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare: The Public Face of Aladura in Diaspora," *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 24: 4 (2004): 494.

¹²J. S. Pobee, and G. Ositelu, *African Initiatives in Christianity: The Growth, Gifts, and Diversities of Indigenous African Churches: A Challenge to Ecumenical Movement*, (Geneva: WCC Publications 1998), 40-42.

American faith healers and tele-evangelists like Kenneth Haggin, Kenneth Copeland, Oral Robert, T. L. Osborn and John Arazin.¹³ Again, Isiramen argues that by 1968, the Nigerian born dynamic and charismatic preacher, late Archbishop Benson Idahosa emerged and founded the Church of God Mission International, Incorporated, with headquarters in Benin City, Edo State. Eventually, Isiramen recognises as the father of Neo-Pentecostalism in Nigeria. Meanwhile, Assemblies of God Churches, The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Church of God Mission International, and among others are classified as Pentecostal churches. The middle of 1980 recorded an unprecedented upsurge of numerous neo-Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. Some of the founders of these churches are William Kumuyi of the Deeper Life Bible Church, David Oyedepo of the Living Faith Church (aka Winners chapel), Daniel Kolawole Olukoya of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, Chris Oyakhilome of the Believers Loveworld Assembly (aka Christ Embassy) and Temitope Balogun Joshua of the Synagogue Church of all Nations.¹⁴

In the light of the foregoing, it is crystal clear and worth-asserting that Pentecostalism started in Nigeria as a result of the emergence of African Indigenous churches in the 20th century. Most of the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches have their bearings from some of the African Indigenous Churches. For instance, the founder of The Redeemed Christian Church of God Late Rev. Josiah Akindayomi left Cherubim and Seraphim to form a Christian body that flowered to RCCG. The founder of MFM, Rev. Olukoya also has CAC background. The implication of this is that the phenomenon of Pentecostal in Nigeria was not imported to us, and if also it did not fill any social or religious vacuum. To this end, charismatic/Pentecostal affinities coalesce to constitute an overall culture in Nigeria.

The Features of Nigerian Pentecostal Churches

Ukpong observes that Pentecostalism is not a denomination rather a movement of Christians that integrates a firm belief in the experience of the disciples on the day of Pentecost, desiring with intensity to

¹³Isiramen 307.

¹⁴Isiramen, 307-309.

share in that experience through the power of the Holy Spirit manifesting spiritual gifts which include speaking in tongues, renewal of the church, the sanctification of individuals and the empowerment for service.¹⁵ Isiramen buttresses this further, that Nigerian Pentecostals take it as an obligation to lead people to experience by themselves the power of the Holy Spirit, which they have experienced.¹⁶ Testimonies about the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives are therefore important features. Today, several testimonies have become marketing strategy to advertise the product(s) of these Pentecostal churches.

Furthermore, Emielu takes a step forward to include Pentecostal spirituality through music and worship.¹⁷ He adds that the pursuit of this spirituality has both personal and global historical implication, culminating in the growth of several Pentecostal and charismatic renewal movements worldwide, with the sole aim of actualizing the objectives of Pentecost. By implication, Nigerian Pentecostals introduce boisterous singing and dancing to their liturgy. Pentecostal worship is vibrant, ecstatic, jubilant, all-consuming and tailored towards the total well-being of the individual and the community at large.¹⁸ Corroborating the above, Asamoah-Gyadu aptly observes that the prevalence of a holistic spirituality is the hallmark of African Pentecostal churches.¹⁹ Gornik avers that all African Pentecostal churches emphasize the relevance of the worship of Jesus, celebrating joy and expectation of blessing.²⁰

Moreover, a strong awareness of the place of the Holy Ghost in the Christian life is evident by such charismatic activities as the exercise of all the gifts of the spirit and a strong belief in the necessity, power and effectiveness of prayer in the life of a believer. Prayer meetings where believers are given opportunity to express their feelings freely are a common feature among the Pentecostals.²¹ In addition, Pentecostal

¹⁵Ukpong, 6.

¹⁶Isiramen, 306.

¹⁷A. Emielu, "Music and Pentecostalism in Nigeria: The Afro- American Influence" in S.O. Oyewole, et.al, eds. *Science in the Perspective of African Religion AFREL, Islam and Christianity*, Ilorin: (LSIEmielu 2010) 288

¹⁸Emielu, 290.

¹⁹J. K. Asamoah-Gyadu *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context*, (Oregon: WIPF & Stock 2013), 5.

²⁰Gornik 6.

²¹Isiramen, 306.

movements emphasize the Holy Spirit, voluntary association, grassroots, reading of the Bible, a heightened sense of personal virtue and discipline, and the reach of a global parish.²²

Another feature of Nigerian Pentecostals is prosperity preaching. Isiramen bemoans the fact that church polity is aristocratic and its constitution has resemblance with that of a sole proprietorship of commercial enterprise.²³ This therefore constitutes the nitty-gritty of the paper. Asamoah-Gyadu corroborates this assertion by stating that contemporary Pentecostalism is very much a Christianity of power and prosperity, and the Bible is used as guidance for those who want to prosper.²⁴ Contemporary Pentecostal preaching is an account of the application of the principle of success and breakthrough. Ojo reiterates the foregoing by asserting that two distinctive themes of Nigerian Pentecostalism are piety and power.²⁵ Asamoah-Gyadu underscores the fact that overemphasis in this regard has made the Pentecostal attitude towards the scripture with a general disrespect and uninteresting behaviour towards homiletical hermeneutics.²⁶

A remarkable feature of Nigerian Pentecostalism is the spectacular flamboyant life style of some of the church leaders. Not only this, schism within the church is another feature of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. Isiramen asserts that this appears to arise from the emphatic claims on the possession of divine revelation and scriptural authority.²⁷ It gives rise to conflicts in revelations and their interpretation. Lastly, another feature is security of life and cessation from systematic poverty.

Probity and Accountability in the Nigerian Pentecostal Churches

The concept of probity like others is capable of various meanings. However, for the purpose of this work, probity means honesty, while accountability is to be answerable to someone or something; to be

²² David, 27.

²³ Isiramen, 200.

²⁴ Asamoah-Gyadu, 164.

²⁵ M. A. Ojo, *The End-Time Army: Charismatic Movement in Modern Nigeria*, (Trenton: African World Press, 2006), 298.

²⁶ Asamoah-Gyadu 164.

²⁷ Isiramen, 306.

responsible for something and to be accountable as a steward. An authority sees financial accountability as a principle of financial stewardship.²⁸ A steward is one who occupies the position of manager of the owner's possession. He or she is required to exercise responsibility over funds and assets entrusted to him or her. Few stewards attain the position of honour and trustworthiness without submitting to a system of accountability; a system where clear explanations of all financial activities are detailed, recorded and reported to honour constituents and for attendees.

It is of interest to note that when probity and accountability are unequivocally involved in any organization, it means that leadership and followership are brought to account for their actions. Alamu describes leadership in its simplest form as the ability to inspire, direct, motivate and encourage others positively to a targeted end.²⁹ It could also be noted as a rising up to the level of organizing and adequately coordinating the resources of time, relationship, skills, expertise and finances to achieve a goal for the common good of all. From the foregoing definitions of leadership, it can be inferred that leadership connotes assignment, effectiveness, responsibility, accountability, vision, character, productivity, persuasion and realization of targeted goals.³⁰

Leadership position is God-ordained; God has chosen and prepared some individuals for it. Thus, human leadership is a delegated responsibility exercised with high sense of humility on God's behalf. For the church leaders or clergy, it is the parishioners that look up to them for moral and spiritual guidance.³¹ More often than not, church leaders are pastoral habitus, representatives and mouthpiece of God. As church leaders, their vocational identities, spiritual journeys and leadership styles profoundly set the course for the congregation.³²

²⁸www.crown.org/blog/financial-accountability-in-church-administration

²⁹A. G. Alamu, "Leadership Qualities Needed in the Contemporary Nigerian Society," in Dopamu, A.P. et al. (eds.) *Religion, Leadership and Society: Focus on Nigeria*. (Lagos: NASR, 2004), 318.

³⁰Alamu 320.

³¹Alamu, 320-323.

³²Gornik, 52.

Gornik asserts that no single appellation captures what church leaders are called. They can be called Archbishops, Bishops, Archdeacon, Pastor, Branch Pastor, Minister, Apostle, Prophet, Prophetess, Presiding Bishop, Senior Pastor, General Overseer, General Superintendent and Presiding Pastor. The above nomenclatures are just some of the titles of African Church leaders. Again, Gornik (70) is apposite by describing good pastors at work as building community of faith which comes increasingly to share the knowledge of God and to live abundant life. Good pastors at work in Africa are able to imagine and build communities through four primary and overlapping domains of activity:

First, pastors are spiritual directors. Second, they are agents of healing, directing ministries of healing that lead members into outcomes of liberation and empowerment. Third, pastors are institution builders, which means that they must take the idea of a church and execute it, so it is sustainable. Fourth, pastors are cultural intermediaries, helping their members succeed in a cultural setting. While churches are mediating institutions, pastoral work mediates a way of understanding God, the world, and redemption, not as a simple recipe but a process adapted and calibrated to new settings. The overall effect is a richly woven pastoral ministry.³³

In Pauline's teaching in II Corinthians 8:1, he admonishes the Corinthian church as well as contemporary church about the proper handling and distribution of church funds and the need to do so in a transparent and accountable fashion. Since substantial amounts of money are involved, they should be evenly distributed.³⁴ He buttresses further that any Christian leaders who resist financial accountability make themselves suspect. Leaders who put too much trust in themselves should not be trusted by others. Again, he emphasizes the relevance of a check and balance without which

³³Gornik, 70-71.

³⁴A. Randy, "Financial Integrity and Accountability in Churches and Ministries: Appendix A from Money, Possessions and Eternity" www.epm.org/resources/2007/Dec/4/financial-integrity-accountability-churches 2007 retrieved on the 18th October, 2018.

financial disasters and monumental sin would set in.³⁵

Paul also says, "providing honourable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."³⁶ From the above statement, two significant safeguards for preserving financial integrity and accountability are deduced. First, we need to take pains to do what is right, even when a system of financial accountability seems awkward or, time-consuming. Often times, it may seem unnecessary. However, it is right and therefore we must take pains to establish proper checks and balances.³⁷

Second, it is not sufficient for a church leader to say my conscience is clear before the Lord and the congregation. Our actions must be above reproach, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men. Whatever system of collecting and distributing fund we choose, it must include awareness and accountability, with a plurality of character-approved men and women of proven integrity.³⁸

The issue of accountability is crucial and all-embracing to both the leaders and the followers. Randy avers that accountability must start with the church of God because the church is the eyes of the world.³⁹ Accountability must begin internally with wise and careful choices of leaders. It must include a commitment to plural leadership that does not leave one person, or one commanding individual surrounded by passive ones, in a position to embezzle, squander or use funds for his or her personal benefit.

According to Schaeffer, 'God has given us rules not because He is arbitrary, but because the rules ... are fixed in His own character,... Thus, when we sin, we break the law of God...in the direction of destroying what we really are.'⁴⁰ Since the leaders model their characters after God, they are expected to uphold spiritual truth and set a parameter of accountability to keep them away from sin and

³⁵Randy, "Financial Integrity and Accountability in Churches

³⁶II Cor. 8:21 NKJV

³⁷Randy, "Financial Integrity and Accountability in Churches

³⁸Randy, "Financial Integrity and Accountability in Churches

³⁹Randy "Financial Integrity and Accountability in Churches

⁴⁰F. Schaeffer *The Accountable Position of the Eastern Church*, Edinburgh: T&T, 2001.

financial recklessness. Accountability is the best set of parameter that keeps leaders focused and lined up. Christian leaders who are not honest and accountable are not only the ones who fall but also give Jesus Christ a bad reputation in the church and world.⁴¹ Schaeffer again posits that church leaders should encourage themselves to be trusted with church accountability since they are stewards of God.⁴²

J. Hampton Keathley III there are five reasons for establishing accountability. These are:

1. Accountability is an essential part of a functional society, the prototype for which is the Triune Godhead itself. Though the members of the trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are co-eternal and co-equal, each being God of very God, scripture gives evidence of accountability that exists within the Godhead. The Spirit accepts His role as the Enabler or Comforter, the Son accepts His role as the suffering saviour and all proceeds from the Father.
2. Accountability helps to promote biblical controls or checks and balances. It provides the necessary discipline and support needed to see people reach godly goals. God has given the world and the Holy Spirit as His agents of control to help provide direction and controls on our lives, but accountability to other believers becomes another key instrument to aid in bringing about self-discipline and inner controls.
3. Accountability is necessary because like sheep, we tend to go our own way. We are all self-willed. We want to protect our comfort zones and avoid having to deal with certain issues that are important to becoming obedient Christians.
4. Accountability promotes servant-like leadership in keeping with the pastoral mandate to watch over the flock. One of the key requirements of a servant leader is faithfulness to the things entrusted to him.
5. Accountability is protective to both leaders and to the flock. The biblical model for church leadership is a collective leadership of elders

⁴¹www.church-leadership.org/pages-asp?pageid=2018

⁴²Schaeffer, 23.

which provides a structure for genuine accountability. Shared leadership provides close accountability, genuine partnership, and peer relationship- the very things imperial pastors shrink from at all costs.⁴³

Jacob believes that the doctrine of Christian stewardship, under which humanity holds earthly resources in the trust of God, helps, creates an inextricable link between accounting and Christian ethics.⁴⁴ It is a common belief among evangelicals that human beings are free moral agents, accountable (and held accountable) for their thoughts and actions, with God doing most of the accounting. God's standard of accountability is said to be evident throughout the biblical narratives and they form the basis for the disciplines of evangelical religiosity. Like compassion, this aspect of God's relationship with humanity serves as a model for the ideal relationship among human beings.

For evangelical churchgoers, accountability is a religious concept that pertains to almost all aspects of daily life, including economics, faulty, sexuality, church business, politics, and civic responsibility. accountability provides a framework for legitimating the authority of church pastors and elders, especially in evangelical mega churches where bureaucratic responsibilities are divided among administrative terms and management chains. in the aftermath of high -profile televangelism scandals in Lagos, accountability has emerged as a dominant ethos in the corporate congregationalism of evangelism.⁴⁵

On the part of the church followers, they understand the enormity of their expectations and functions. For the most part, members, donors and attendees recognize that enormous needs exist upon which the church is called to meet and they (members and donors) usually want to respond adequately to help the church meet those needs. However, members and donors want to be assured that the funds they give,

⁴³J.H. Keathley III, "Mark 16: Accountability" from <http://www.bwe.org/seriespage/Mark-16-accountability> 2004

⁴⁴Omri Elisha "Moral Ambitious of Grace: The Paradox of compassion and Accountability in Evangelical Faith-based Activism" *Cultural Anthropology*, 23/1 (Feb 2008): 189-173.

⁴⁵Omri Elisha, 189-173.

many times sacrificially are being utilized effectively and that the church actively involved in ministering in a way that is pleasing to the Lord. To this end, there can be no acceptable alternative to financial accountability.⁴⁶

With the involvement of church leaders and church followers, or pastors and members, the place of a check and balance system cannot be overemphasized. Indubitably, it is a check and balance system that protects both leaders and members from harm. We endeavour to do this by being open to what we are thinking and doing so that we can receive encouragement and reproof when needed.⁴⁷ Theologically, we are accountable to God and to one another. By this, lack of trust, suspicion, financial disasters could be averted by setting up careful procedures that take into consideration natural tendency to sin.⁴⁸ Within the province of eschatology, it is obvious biblically that everyone must render an account of his/her stewardship before the Supreme Being. This eschatological duty of rendering account of one's stewardship becomes a prerequisite for the attainment of the Kingdom of God or hell fire. It is of paramount importance to assert that rendering an account also is a determinant factor of separating the wheat from the chaff. Eschatological accountability is all-inclusive and all-embracing because earthly accountability is restricted to those saddled with the responsibility of holding positions of trust where accountability is necessary. Eschatological accountability is all embracing and all-inclusive because it involves every human being regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, culture, age and status. This eschatological stewardship determines everlasting bliss or damnation of every individual.

Sequel to the above, it is quite illuminating that in Nigerian Pentecostal churches the procedure of accountability has been fashioned out, but not ab initio effective and cyclical or steady. Looking critically at a handful of the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, there are procedures for accountability by which weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, bi-annually, annually, or as the case may be, the

⁴⁶ www.crown.org/blog/financial-accountability,2018

⁴⁷ www.church/leadership.org/pages-asp?pageid=2018

⁴⁸ Randy, "Financial Integrity and Accountability in Churches

Pentecostal churches locally render account to the Zonal heads; and the Zonal heads to the Provincial heads; and from the Provincial heads to the Regional heads; for onward transmission to the national headquarters. This chain of authority has been in existence and even virtually all the Pentecostal churches have auditors, who audit their financial account, as well as the church numerical and general growth periodically. Nevertheless, in many cases, the national headquarters where the General Overseer, the presiding Bishop, the presiding Pastor, or the Senior Pastor resides feel that it is not necessary to be accountable to the members; this makes them suspect thereby generating lack of confidence.

But when accountability and probity are involved, the exercise should be holistic and cyclical. This important approach will build confidence in membership and leadership and it will encourage members as well as donors to do more despite the fact that some of them care less about the periodic publication of financial account of the church. Holistic involvement and pastoral discipline of the leaders on accountability and probity should be statutorily entrenched. However, among the church leaders, especially the Senior Pastors, Founders, General Overseer and others, there has been the neglect of financial accountability, and this has led to suspicion, mistrust, lack of integrity and confidence from the members. This is the contradiction or antithesis of accountability pervading the Nigerian Pentecostal churches where there is no check and balance.

The Antithesis of Accountability in Contemporary Pentecostal Churches

We could recall that financial accountability is based on the principle of financial stewardship. Nonetheless, a handful of Nigerian Pentecostal leaders do not leave above board like Caesar's wives and they resist financial accountability. With the absence of accountability, checks and balances as well as feedback become a problem. The fundamental problem which every Pentecostal has, which Randy heckles also is "who has the courage and authority to tell decision makers that what they are doing is unbiblical"?³³⁰ With this at the back of the mind, several members deliberately refuse to venture into

it, yet they are not satisfied by the financial state of the church. A handful of these church leaders use church money without caution, embezzle and squander funds for their personal benefits.

Randy and Barret capture the whole essence of neglecting financial accountability by Pentecostal church leaders.⁴⁹ Randy opines that some Christian churches think nothing but providing expensive cars for their executives, booking first class flight around the world, and accommodating their staff in luxury hotels.⁵⁰ According to global mission's researcher David Barrett, an estimated billions of dollars was embezzled by the world Christian churches in the year 2000, with an estimated 75 billion dollars embezzled between 1980 and 2000.⁵¹ The statistics above has shown that some church leaders spend church funds frivolously, and recklessly by building palaces, purchasing private jets and living a flamboyant life. Among the Nigerian Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals, Akhilomen has justified the stupendous wealth of a handful of Nigerian Pentecostal church leaders. Citing *Forbe*⁵² (2018), he catalogued the list of the richest pastors in Nigeria as follows: Bishop David Oyedepo of the Living Faith Church, aka Winners' Chapel net worth 180 Million Dollars; Pastor Chris Oyakhilome of Believers Love world aka Christ Embassy net worth 50 Million Dollars; Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye of the Redeemed Christian Church of God net worth 39 Million Dollars, Prophet Temitope Joshua of the Synagogue Church of all Nations net worth 25 Million Dollars, Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor of the Word of Life Bible Church net worth 15 Million Dollars, Pastor Chris Okotie of the Apocalyptic Church net worth 12 Million Dollars.⁵³ Besides, Bishop David Oyedepo has three private jets, Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye has a private jet as well as Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor and others take first class flight around the globe.⁵⁴

As a matter of fact, Late Archbishop Benson Idahosa, who was the

⁴⁹Randy, "Financial Integrity and Accountability in Churches

⁵⁰Randy, "Financial Integrity and Accountability in Churches

⁵¹Randy, "Financial Integrity and Accountability in Churches

⁵²D. B. Barrett, et.al, *World Christian Trend* (Pasadena: CA William Carey Library 2001).

⁵³Akhilomen, D. O. "The Church on Earth and the Quest for Heaven: Gleanings from Salient Church Historical Experiences" 70th Inaugural Lecture Series of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Thursday 26th

⁵⁴April, 2018, 34-35.

father of Neo-Pentecostal churches in Nigeria preached prosperity gospel and lived in affluence. He actually exposed other Neo-Pentecostal preachers to money theology. As founders and overseers of these churches, accountability is far from their agenda, thereby, making their attitude antithetical. However, some of these church leaders have loosely stated that most of the money they spend is their personal money and cash gifts received from concerned members. This argument is always supported with Proverb 18: 16 which states that "a man's gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men" (NKJV).

As earlier stated by Isiramen that church polity is aristocratic and its constitutions have resemblance with that of a sole proprietorship of commercial enterprise; all these make some church leaders to ignore rendering account to the teeming members.⁵⁵ Akhilomen refers to this sole proprietorship in the churches as 'pastorpreneurs' because the church leaders establish churches for profit, cashing on the failure of the government to adequately fend for the people.⁵⁶ This is evident in the Church of God Mission International established by Late Archbishop Benson Idahosa where the wife succeeded him. Again, there is also an indication that one of the sons of Bishop Oyedepo would succeed the father as his sons are currently controlling some branches of the church. Again, Akhilomen captures the personalisation and Pastorpreneurship of the Nigerian Pentecostal leaders thus;

In the registration and incorporation of ...Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, the founder is often listed as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and President of the corporation, with members of his family and close relatives serving as board of trustees. In addition to this, most of these churches transit power from fathers to mothers or their children. This is evident, for example, in the Church of God Mission where a wife succeeded her husband and a son is evidently prepared to take

⁵⁵Isiramen 200.

⁵⁶Akhilomen, 62.

over the leadership of the church. In the case of Spirit and Life Bible Church, leadership transited from father to mother with every certainty of the son succeeding in the event of the death of the mother. This trend is noticeable in many other ministries/ Pentecostal churches where power is transferred along family line in consideration of primordial interest instead of spiritual leading.⁵⁷

This is the era of unprecedented self-interest; the trend encourages the love of the self and lacks all sense of altruism which is antithetical to Christian ideals. The practice not only encourages the conceit of man but also promotes vanity of my will be done instead of thy will be done.⁵⁸

Basically, some church leaders believe that they are completely immune from any probe since they are not accountable to their members as far as their members' prayers are answered. As long as their members are prospering and flourishing, account rendering to them by the leaders is needless.

Lack of accountability among church leaders contravenes the objectives and policies of church organization. It is dishonest of leadership to explain away the relevance of probity and accountability. The major cause of proliferation of today's churches is the lack of checks and balances of which suspicion, mistrust and neglect set in, and the end-product is the exit and establishment of another church by the aggrieved church leaders. As a result of this, Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor left Church of God Mission International and established Word of Life Bible Church because he was asked to account for instruments meant for the Church of God Mission International. Rev. Felix Omobude of the New Covenant Church with headquarters in Benin City also left Church of God Mission International. Bishop Olutayo of the Bible Believing Church, Abuja was the brother in-law of Bishop Oyedepo; he (Bishop Olutayo)

⁵⁷Akilomen, 60.

⁵⁸Akilomen, 58.

opted out of Winners Chapel as a result of lack of accountability. Bishop Agyema of the Winners Chapel, Ghana also left Bishop Oyedepo's church and hijacked the branch of the church in Ghana. More often than not, the aggrieved church leaders in this regard anchor their exit on 'divine call', whereas it was largely due to highly publicized mismanagement, lack of accountability and deceptions that characterised the conditions of their exit. In fact, virtually all the Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal churches in contemporary Nigerian society have witnessed break away and secessions. That is while churches in Nigeria are contesting space.

Feedback is also a problem to probity and accountability in Nigerian Pentecostal churches. On the surface, some of the contemporary churches, in their organogram have a section or department for research and development which is saddled with the responsibility of innovation and integration of fresh and new discoveries of which the issue of feedback is paramount. For example, The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Mountain of Fire and Ministries, The Living Faith Church and some others are front burners in this regard. However, most of their activities that border on feedback mechanism are not given any serious attention because they seem not to see the relevance of feedback to leaders, especially in the present day church. Their major preoccupation is how tithe and offering can increase, and how other measures can be applied to generate more funds and how to compete with other reigning churches in town and so on.

The Way Forward

As earlier pointed out, God gives out rules not because he is arbitrary, but because the rules are fixed and obligatory in his own character. Therefore, it is crucial for both the church leaders and members to be accountable because it is biblical and eschatological at the end of the age. Furthermore, leaders must influence their followers, i.e. communities of Christians with God's truth by modelling their character through a set of parameters to keep them away from sin. Accountability is the best set of parameters because it has the propensity of getting members to repose confidence in their leaders.

Moreover, there should be checks and balances on the various tiers of church hierarchy so that there will positive feedback. Church leaders with proven integrity should be empowered and entrusted with the responsibility of promoting feedback, whether positive or negative with periodic publication of overall church account for all to see. This will help to avoid suspicion and also gain members' confidence. Narayana Murthy, a multi-billionaire was interviewed by B. S. Nagesh on a social media platform on the topic: 'The Key to Continuously Growth as a Leader', he states inter alia;

First of all, the biggest instrument for improvement for leaders is feedback. Most leaders who failed in the world, failed because they cut off the feedback channels. They allowed only positive signals to come to them...everyone of these people cut off the feedback channels. Therefore, they have to create a platform where people give honest feedback and if you use the feedback when you sit alone, you reflect on it, I think there is an opportunity for everybody to improve on it.⁵⁹

The foregoing statement implies that it is crucial to allow feedback whether positive or negative. Thus, a feedback helps to reflect on matters of importance; ensures improvements and opens vestige of greater opportunities. It is on the basis of this that complete confidence and mutual trust can be built by both leaders and members. To this end, feedback will definitely swallow up parochialism, ego, lop-sidedness and pride if honestly addressed.

Randy recommends that Christians need to tighten up the scrutiny of all funds coming to the church or ministry, and to safeguard people's or donor's monies and control them with strictest procedures.⁶⁰ This will help funds that are distributed to ministries in good faith by the people who assume they are being used carefully.⁶¹ Consequently, every church organization needs members who are vocal advocates

⁵⁹Narayana Murthy (2018) An interview by B. S. Nagesh on the Key to continuously Grow as a leader on social media platform.

⁶⁰Randy, "Financial Integrity and Accountability in Churches

for the ministry's donors and beneficiaries.⁶¹ It is also true that these Pentecostal churches have governing bodies. But, these governing bodies should be empowered to be independent without undue interference from the founder so as to protect the integrity of the church, its leadership and its objectives.

Conclusion

The study has x-rayed and analysed probity and accountability in present-day Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. It has also revealed the contradiction that the churches have experienced and are still experiencing in Nigerian Pentecostal leadership. In the light of the serious consequences of this antithesis, the paper postulates a blueprint that includes accountability, checks and balances; it also stresses the need to assign leaders with proven integrity, establish independent church boards to be saddled with the responsibility of promoting positive feedback with periodic publication of church accounts, as well as appoint vocal advocates of church organisation.

It is imperative to state that it is biblical, theological and eschatological to be accountable because we are God's stewards here on earth. A steward must be honest, trustworthy, diligent, prudent and above board. The importance of accountability and positive feedback cannot be sacrificed at the altar of spiritual expediency. The confidence of members on leaders and the entrenchment of mutual trust cannot be swept under the carpet. Therefore, this paper advocates that probity and accountability are sine qua non for human and the church realisation of full gospel ideals and goals in contemporary society.

⁶¹Randy, "Financial Integrity and Accountability in Churches