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Pentecostalism in Sierra Leone

Contextual Theologies, Theological Education and Public Engagements
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Introduction
The Rise of Pentecostalism in Africa

Intercultural Theology, World Christianity and Pentecostalism in Africa

Until the dawn of what is known today as intercultural theology, the theological voices, liturgical practices and life experiences of Christian counterparts who are situated in the global south – places where Christianity is clearly growing – were not well represented at the table where western theological discourses were held. However, after it gained prominence in scholarly circles, intercultural theology both challenged the premise upon which this perception thrived, and, argued for the inclusion in academic theology of a decolonized perspective that celebrates and embraces as equally valid all modes of doing theology, whether they were conceived in a western or non-western context. That call would allow western scientific theology to include those contextual Christian traditions that were usually neglected by western theology. That call allowed theologies such as those conceived in non-Western and/or non-literary traditions which permeate the life of ordinary Christians in the southern hemisphere to be heard. Whereas the importance of the local cultural context in constructing theology was not to be absolutized, intercultural theology was insistent that the discipline was to progress beyond merely emphasizing the relationship between theology and the specific contexts in which it is constructed. The qualification that restrained intercultural theology from absolutizing the local context was necessary because it made provision for newly developed theologies to dialogue with, build bridges and ensure mutual enrichment between diverse groups, whether they are situated in the western or non-western world.

But whereas the resilient Christian growth which has happened in the southern continents does present evidence of the translatability of the Christian faith, it is nevertheless motioning a sobering moment which forces European and North American Christian counterparts whose missionaries once laboured in those

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distant lands to engage in an introspective reflection of the growth, stagnation and/or lack thereof, of the faith at the home front. What this growth does suggest is that southern Christian counterparts are mediating a shifting of the ground beneath the edifice of World Christianity, for which new analytic perspectives and interpretative accounts are needed. Although this substantial growth and development of the faith is not without problems, nevertheless the non-western Christian theologies that have arisen there are now being spread abroad through immigrant Christian communities they have set up. These revitalized Christian faith communities blossoming in the south and among its diasporas will become crucial in understanding the changing texture created by this new development in World Christianity.

Driven by this turn of events, the case could be made that in order to better understand the changing fortunes of World Christianity one has to look at how Pentecostalism has transformed the southern hemisphere making Africa, Latin and Caribbean America, and the Pacific rim today’s hotspots of World Christianity. Pentecostalism’s growth in those places is most clearly meteoric and converts who embody Pentecostal and charismatic intuitions account for a major share of the Christian populations in the majority world. In some of those places, a new spin has been added to reanimate the same old message of the Christian gospel which people have heard. As these Pentecostal developments are unfolded, some have argued that an outrightly unprecedented reappearance of primal spirituality which seeks to draw out connections between biblical and traditional African worldviews, appear to be simultaneously occurring. In Africa, Pentecostalism with its newer Charismatic variants have become most undeniably the fulcrum around which the revivalist ferment of African Christianity presently revolves. Founded at the behest of interdenominational Evangelical student ministries that were in operation at university campuses from the 1970s onwards, the spiritual tentacles of this energetic faith have blossomed enormously across the continent and are now being exported globally

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through the growing (im)migrant Pentecostal and Charismatic church communities that have been planted and patronized by the African Christian Diaspora.10

Nevertheless, as I have earlier pointed out, the prodigious growth of Pentecostal Christianity in Africa, is not without problems. Among others, issues of definition, historiography and typologies are most critical. First, opinion is divided among scholars about how best this recent pneumatic development in African Christianity (as is the case elsewhere11) is to be classified. Given these scholarly contestations, Africa’s Pentecostal movements have taken on a variety of taxonomic descriptions such as Pentecostal, Neo-Pentecostal, Charismatic and Neo-Charismatic renewal movements.12 While each of these terms explains aspects crucial to the constitutive elements of the various expressions of Pentecostalism across Africa, they however stop short of telling the whole story. Therefore, researchers have used these terms interchangeably, ascribing meanings that oscillate between one concept and the other, when explaining recent developments which have taken place within the movement. This writer is no exception to this precedent, as I have often used these terms interchangeably.

A second concern commentators have wrestled with seeks to determine whether Pentecostalism has a centripetal or centrifugal origin. Whereas Azusa’s importance in Pentecostal historiography has an established and dominant place in the historical narrative, scholars are now calling for due recognition to be made of those places elsewhere in the world where Pentecostal revival broke out independent of any influence from Azusa. Hence, new scholarly research has made it is more tenable to argue for a polygenesis rather than a monogenesis.

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origin of global Pentecostalism. A third issue concerns typologies. This issue questions the extent to which African Independent Churches (AICs) could be legitimately incorporated in the newer Pentecostal developments in Africa. Appealing to the shared sense of spirituality believed to exist between these two church developments, AICs have been largely seen to belong to the same spiritual flair upon which later expressions of Pentecostalism have thrived and are now transforming the church scene in Africa. Notwithstanding these critical issues that have occupied the attention of recent scholarship, Pentecostalism has shown a remarkable ability to adapt to the worldview needs of different cultures in Africa and among the African Diaspora. This has made the spiritual intuitions of the movement extremely appealing to sections of the population who have embraced this version of Christianity. The belief shared by adherents of African Pentecostalism is that the movement is in a better position to deal with Africa’s spiritual exigencies in ways that are convergent with Africa’s understanding of the Bible.

Africa’s newer Pentecostal and Charismatic movements are predicated upon the aspirations of Africa’s youthful urban and global minded elite populations. This constituency clearly perceives the movement as addressing unanswered questions brought about by conversion to the Christian faith and acquiescence to a life of faithful discipleship in a modernizing Africa. Consequently, the forms of Christianity promoted by African Pentecostalism aims to contribute an African allure that widens the faith’s appeal and resonance with primal African cultures. For this reason, the various mutations of African Pentecostalism have arrogated


to this new Christian movement the ability to connect at various levels with the
deep seated issues influencing Africa’s supernatural worldviews which were
believed to have been ignored by earlier forms of African Christianity.16 Spurred
by this imagination, African Pentecostalism places itself on a pedestal where
many believe it exerts a better disposition that meets the hugely differentiated
spiritual, material and practical needs of its clientele no matter where they are
situated.17 This explains why the spirituality and worldview currents engendered
by African Pentecostalism have not only succeeded in pollinating mainline
Protestant denominations18 and Roman Catholicism19 on the continent, but have
now spread overseas, gaining popularity among the African Christian Diaspora in
the west.20

16 Clifton R. Clarke, Pentecostalism: Insights from Africa and the African Diaspora
(Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018); Martin Lindhardt, Pentecostalism in Africa:
Presence and Impact of Pneumatic Christianity in Postcolonial Studies (Liden: Brill,
2015); Ogbu Kalu, African Pentecostalism: An Introduction (Oxford: Oxford University
17 Allan Anderson, An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity
18 See among others, Cephas Omenyo, Pentecost outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the
Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana (Zoetermeer:
Boekencentrum, 2006); Ogbu Kalu, "Who is afraid of the Holy Ghost?" Presbyterians and
19 Ludovic Lado, “Experienienen of Interculturation in a Catholic Charismatic
Movements in Cameroon,” in: Kristin Norget, Valentina Napolitano and Maya Mayblin,
eds., Anthropology of Catholicism: A Reader (California: University of California Press,
2017); Robert Dowd and Ani Sarkissian, “The Roman Catholic Charismatic Movement
56, no. 3 (2017), pp. 536 – 557; Gabriel T. Wankar, “Toward Common Ground:
Catholicism and Pentecostalism in African Christianity”, International Review of Mission
20 Among others, see; Amuluche-Greg Nnamani, “The Flow of African Spirituality into
World Christianity: A Case for Pneumatology and Migration,” Mission Studies 32 (2005),
p. 332; Annalisa Butticci, African Pentecostals in Catholic Europe: The Politics of Presence
in the Twenty-First Century (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016); Claudia
Währische-Oblau, The Missionary Self-perception of Pentecostal/Charismatic Church
Leaders from the Global South in Europe (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Frieder Ludwig and
Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, African Christian Presence in the West: New Immigrant
Congregations and Transnational Networks in North America and Europe (Trenton, NJ:
Africa World Press, 2011); Afe Adogame, “African Christians in a Secularizing Europe”,
Pentecostal Christianity in Sierra Leone

Recent discourses in Pentecostal scholarship have identified English-speaking West Africa as the epicentre, perhaps even the single most important factor responsible for initiating, developing and fanning globally the flames of Pentecostal and Charismatic renewal movements.21 African Christian adherents who identify with the pneumatic sensibilities of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements have found solace in the fact that the kind of beliefs, modes of grassroots theologizing and church liturgical practices promoted by such movements seem to be convergent with the myriad of spiritual pathologies originating from traditional religions that are affecting the profession of the Christian faith in Africa.22 The feeling among followers of these movements is that the various expressions of Pentecostalism address more effectively African Christian realities in sensible ways than that which previous missionary involvement with Africa had not done.23 Whereas Pentecostal and Charismatic expressions of Christianity are viewed as congruent with the underlying currents of Africa’s traditional religious conceptions, these pneumatic movements have nevertheless been accused of unintentionally reviving primal spiritualities among the faithful.24 For this reason, rather than reproducing conscientious biblical Christianity, Africa’s pneumatic Christian movements are still struggling to properly indigenize the essential contents of the faith upon African soil.

Whereas scholarly attention has mostly concentrated its extensive analysis of the pneumatic Christian developments that have occurred in Nigeria25 and Ghana,26


24 Harvey Cox, Fire from Heaven, 83.


26 See among others, Paul Gifford, Ghana’s New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy (London: Hurst, 2004); Jane E. Soothill, Gender, Social Change and Spiritual Power: Charismatic Christianity in Ghana (Leiden: Brill, 2007); J.
(and this for very good reasons), hardly is attention focused on Pentecostal and Charismatic developments occurring elsewhere in the West African subregion, particularly in smaller states like Sierra Leone. With only about 20% to 30% of its seven million inhabitants identifying with the Christian faith, and with an even smaller percentage embracing the various expressions of Pentecostalism, Sierra Leone appears to have been excluded from most of the research on West African Pentecostal scholarship. Although this development when viewed from the perspective of statistics amounts to an understandable omission, it is however, a surprising development because as the oldest Protestant missionary field in tropical Africa, Sierra Leone occupies a prominent place in missionary and African church historiography. From that impeccable history, Sierra Leone’s contribution to the early diffusion of missionary and Protestant Christianity across West Africa is well known. Sierra Leone is celebrated for the meritorious work of Evangelical abolitionists, British colonialists and agents of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) which resulted in the founding of Sierra Leone for the resettlement of liberated African slaves. From here, liberated African slaves immensely contributed to the early dissemination and indigenization of Christianity across West Africa. Soon after it was founded, the nation provided university training at Fourah Bay College for some of the most astute minds who had been previously enslaved. These Fourah Bay College trained elites ended up ascending into episcopal leadership positions within the newly founded African church, as well as other public positions of trust to which they were deployed by the colonialists. Samuel Ajayi Crowther become the first and perhaps most prominent liberated African slave to be ordained a bishop in the Anglican Communion after completing training at Fourah Bay College. Such historical contributions to West African Christianity made by indigenous African


agents connected to this country, must have been carefully probed to ascertain what connections the recent resurgence in pneumatic Christianity emerging from there have for understanding the present pneumatic revivals of Christianity in the West African sub-region.

As a response to this omission of Sierra Leone from West African Pentecostal historical and theological scholarship, this book contributes to the debate by examining the origins and contextual exigencies created by the rise of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in Sierra Leone. This volume will offer three key features to readers. First, it uses the rapid rise and development of contemporary Pentecostal ecclesial movements across Sierra Leone to show that the contribution of Sierra Leone to the development of West African church history is not only a thing of the past. Pentecostals have arisen in this country and are showing a resilience that engages theology, culture and society in ways they believe are wholistic. Second, the volume examines Pentecostal theologies to ascertain where they connect with the concerns of African Theology that were formulated by earlier voices in Africa. By reassessing Pentecostal theologies in light of such developments, the volume will provide a window into understanding the African exigencies that African Pentecostal movements bring to Christianity. Third, the volume discusses the Pentecostal public engagements that have seen these movements engage public issues, whether they border on health, culture or governance. In this way, these perspectives will open new research directions that not only locate newer developments in Pentecostalism in Sierra Leone, but in the West African sub-region.

To set the scene from which this contribution will be explore, I will briefly outline the broad strokes of the history of the development of newer Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in Sierra Leone. The history of the formation of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in Sierra Leone owes much of its existence to the revival and church renewal efforts initiated by Evangelical and Protestant para-church organizations in the 1960s onwards. These activities were to later receive significant bolstering when externally founded Charismatic developments were introduced to the church scene in Sierra Leone. Though some of these para-church organizations only started working in Sierra Leone in the late 1960s, or shortly thereafter, others have had a much longer history of missionary involvement in the Sierra Leone church scene. In 1967, the

Evangelical Fellowship of Sierra Leone launched the New Life for All (New Life) evangelistic campaign. Led by the Rev Dr Joseph Sedu Mans, New Life toured throughout Sierra Leone preaching salvation in Christ and inviting young people to be born again. New Life’s evangelistic efforts received a boost when Bill Roberts was sent to revive the Scripture Union of Sierra Leone (SUSL). Charged with responsibility to work with pupils at primary and secondary schools, New Life and SUSL collaborated to organize national youth camps which attracted scores of young people throughout the 1970s.

In the 1980s however, Sierra Leone’s political and economic fortunes cascaded into disrepair. It was also at this time that those students who had become born again while attending secondary schools were admitted to study for various degree programs at Fourah Bay College. So, the need for the founding of the Sierra Leone Fellowship of Evangelical Students (SLEFES) was conceived and established in 1982 to follow up the spiritual development of those students who had earlier been converted at schools or were converting into Christianity at the university. SLEFES operated prayer and Bible study fellowships at all the constituent campuses of the university. In the 1990s, Sierra Leone entered a period that saw a horrendous rebel insurrection that lasted until 2002. It was at this time that international Charismatic agents came to establish charismatic churches and ministries in a war-torn country. The Freetown Bible Training Centre (FBTC) founded by Ross Tatro in 1990, established a Charismatic Bible school which offered a program of rapid discipleship training to anyone interested in the formation of charismatic Bible study fellowships across the country. Soon thereafter, and despite the raging atrocities the rebel war continues to inflict upon life and properties, FBTC became so popular that even members from mainline Protestant denominations were enrolled at the centre and went on to found what they describe as “independent Bible believing churches.” In 1992, Youth with a Mission (YWAM) brought by Mercy Ships combined the distribution of relief supplies, community development work and evangelism to support the establishment of an even wider array of charismatic churches. Although these moves were only intended to mediate spiritual revival among Christians and the churches that were already planted by mainline Evangelical Protestant denominations, they soon led to the formation of new Pentecostal and Charismatic Bible-believing churches.

As the ministry of the many Pentecostal Christian movements were constituted across Sierra Leone, and as the candour of their church and pastoral ministries unfolded, these churches began to display an interest in issues that lie at the heart of the public sphere. For instance, the first of its many doctrines that attracted the attention of the public soon after its establishment was the
prosperity gospel. These churches began to preach that part of the benefits that conversion to Christ brings to believers is that they not only enter a living relationship with the Christ, but that they will begin to prosper – spiritually, materially and economically. Of cause, given the fact that Sierra Leone was a country that was recovering from a brutal rebel war, this message coalesced with the traditional sensibilities of followers and soon became popular. Furthermore, these churches began to campaign for the involvement of born-again Christians in politics, governance and commerce, arguing that their involvement will bring godly transformation to crucial issues in public life. Besides, social issues that were believed to be conduits that perpetuates ancestral rituals were promptly denounced by these movements. If one has become a genuinely born-again Christian, they were expected to make a complete rupture of those traditional practices that tie them to an animist and sinful past. Furthermore, these churches also demonstrated ability that assisted followers to reinvent themselves and to engage social issues with the intent of addressing issues of poverty, bad governance, disease and education that public authorities failed to address. For instance, when the Ebola Virus Disease epidemic occurred, healing evangelists were quick to provide responses. But as knowledge increases, these churches also struggled to reinvent training programs that serve the needs of leaders in the movements.

Therefore, the appearance of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements and the popular sensation they were quick to create in society seems to be providing responses to the events and processes that are at work in the cultures of the people of Sierra Leone. Because such responses are understood to make sense to those sections of the population who have embraced these pneumatic doctrines, a form of Christianity that tries to be faithful to the Scriptures and relevant to the cultural context appear to be emerging. Consequently, pneumatic expressions of Christianity are not only proving attractive but have resulted in the transfiguration of the church context across Sierra Leone.

Structure of the Publication
The central concern of this book is to discuss the extent to which the various shades of African Pentecostalism as well as the grassroots and espoused theologies they have embraced, are engaging with public life in Sierra Leone. To do so, the chapters in this volume reflect upon the diversified forms of contextual theologizing adopted by Christian agents connected with Pentecostalism and its charismatic variants. In the chapters of this volume, I argue that this form of indigenized Pentecostal Christianity appears to be uniquely suited to address those issues that intersect the Christian faith, cultural and traditional worldviews
and public life in Sierra Leone. The goal is to recast Pentecostalism’s belief systems and corresponding practices among the people of Sierra Leone so that the robust contribution of this newer expressions of indigenous African forms of Christian theologizing will be more clearly established.

This exercise begins with this introduction. This is followed by Chapter 1 where an exploration of the relationship between Charismatic movements and Edward Fasholé-Luke’s *Theologia Africana* is undertaken. In it I argue that although scholarly literature about the theologies of newer pneumatic movements in Africa is growing, few attempts have been made to apply specific models proposed by the giants of African Theology to the church contexts of Charismatic Movements. Mindful of the risk of oversimplification, the specific experiences of pneumatic movements in Sierra Leone makes this statement much more justifiable. In this chapter, I draw a connection between Fasholé-Luke’s *Theologia Africana* and the pneumatic church context Sierra Leone. I argue that charismatic movements desire to promote a theology whose shape, content and feature was not indexed upon imported theologies, but one that is solidly engraved in the hearts and minds of Africans. If this theology was to serve its intended purpose, which is to make the new convert both Christian as well as genuinely and authentically African, then it must be developed by Africans themselves.

In Chapter 2, I examine Charismatic healing practices in the context of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) crisis. The chapter argues that the Ebola crisis that crippled West Africa from December 2013 to May 2016 was a watershed moment in the medical history of the republics of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. With a focus on Sierra Leone, I argue that Ebola profoundly impacted the regions inadequate healthcare, obstructed the potential for socioeconomic development, and challenged long held traditional and religious beliefs about disease, health, healing and death. As the tragedy deepened, the world could not stand idly by and observe as poor post-war nations were being overwhelmed by a colossal health catastrophe. By the time Ebola was contained, this obnoxious monster had taken an estimated 11,315 lives in the three worst affected countries. Even though medical connoisseurs were at the forefront of the battle, healing evangelists drawing inspiration from Scripture, African culture and Charismatic spirituality, also provided perspectives in the fight against Ebola. This chapter reviews the response of healing evangelists and discusses how the overall spirituality of charismatic movements inspired hope.

The concern of Chapter 3 is a discussion of the missiological theme of critical contextualization. This chapter examines the process of contextualisation adopted by Charismatic movements in light of Hiebert’s model of critical contextualisation. Three ongoing cultural issues are especially highlighted as
crucial and are used as the point of departure in the discussions: initiation ceremonies, polygamous marriage practices and ancestral rituals. The chapter concludes that, whilst the danger of syncretism is likely to occur where uncritical forms of contextualisation are employed, pneumatic movements in Sierra Leone are attempting to address themes that are concurrent with the African sensibilities of its followers. Whereas this may be an effort to build authentic forms of Christianity that are faithful to Holy Scripture and relevant to the setting in which they are developed, they must be probed from the perspective of intercultural theology.

The growing demand for theological education across a broad spectrum of the churches is the concern of Chapter 4. This chapter examines the context of theological education to analyse the historical stages (the missionary era, the national independence era, the conflict and post-conflict era) through which theological education has developed over the years. Further, the paper considers the nature (university, denominational, and charismatic models of theological education) and emerging concerns (Charismatic Christianity, community development and social transformation, and contextual theology and cultural relevance) of theological education. The chapter concludes by identifying and discussing some of the most important questions raised by theological education that require an intercultural response in Sierra Leone.

In Chapter 5 the charismatic approaches to public governance are considered. In it I argue that the rise of Charismatic Movements is bringing about greater levels of cooperation with the state. This new church development aims at renewing the Christian faith and projecting a more proactive role towards public governance. This ecclesial development shows that African Pentecostal/Charismatic theology appears to be moving away from the perceived isolationist theology that once separated such movements from involvement with the rest of society. By reapplying the movement’s eschatological beliefs, Charismatics are presenting themselves as moral crusaders who regard it as their responsibility to transform public governance. This chapter probes the relationship between the state and newer Charismatic Movements, so that the latter’s understanding of poverty, prosperity, good governance and socio-economic development in Sierra Leone can be more clearly established.

Chapter 6 discusses Christ’s pre-eminence and superiority over the constellation of cosmic powers that African Pentecostalism often set out to defeat. Although Christ’s pre-eminence over seen and unseen cosmic powers is clearly articulated in Colossians 1:15–20, little attempts have been made to situate this epistle in an African Pentecostal worldview where perspectives of angelic beings, evil spirits and demonic forces from extra-terrestrial realms are rife. African Pentecostals
believe that such spirit beings have real power to intrude life with the purpose of obstructing the course and controlling the affairs of men, be they Christians or otherwise. This chapter responds to this omission by highlighting insights from the Colossian ‘Christ hymn’ which facilitates comprehension of the power (or lack thereof) of spirit realms conceived by African Pentecostalism. It re-examines the ‘Christ hymn’ to frame the author’s understanding of Christ’s superiority over cosmic powers. Further, it reconstructs African Pentecostalism’s understanding of cosmic powers grounded in the three interlocking sources influencing the movement. The chapter ends by exploring how African Pentecostalism’s conceptualization of cosmic powers could be reconciled with the Colossian pre-eminence and superiority of Christ.

Intended readership and need

No doubt, Pentecostal scholarship has blossomed enormously across the West African sub-region. For this reason, this volume anticipates attracting readership from a wide variety of fields, such as sociology, anthropology, missiology, religious studies and theology who are interested in exploring the continuing influence and positionality of newer Pentecostal forms of Christianity that are emerging from sub-Saharan Africa. Whereas the above group will be the main audience, the volume will furthermore be of interest to church leaders, Christian policy makers, social development agencies and mission leaders interested in the intersection of contemporary Pentecostal developments in the contexts of modernization and urbanization in Sierra Leone.

This volume is intended to serve a need brought about by the limited scholarly research available on Sierra Leone’s Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. This need is partly connected to the two most common errors that are usually taken in Pentecostal scholarship in the West African sub-region. First, that all the exuberant varieties of Pentecostalism that have developed in the region have been because of the involvement of external agents, principally from the US.33 Second, that these newer forms of Pentecostalism are repulsive to any form of public engagements, and that addressing the many social issues that blight society is often a relatively least emphasized by these movements.34 However, because both perspectives tend to exclude indigenous voices of Pentecostal

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involvement in the public sphere across Africa, they have been challenged.\textsuperscript{35} This volume both analyses the role of indigenous agents in the formation and development of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity and discusses how the faith’s principal actors have engaged with theological, cultural and public issues affecting the life of ordinary citizens across Sierra Leone. Therefore, this volume overall argument defended in this volume is that through this new ecclesial development, Sierra Leone’s Pentecostal Christianities are presenting new insights that aim to contribute to a better indigenous appropriation of Christianity by local African Christian agents.

Chapter 1
Theologia Africana

Introduction, Scope and Methodology
The present growth of the church in Africa appears to have clearly surpassed the astonishing threshold predicted by Professor Edward William Fasholé-Luke in the late 1970s. In particular, the appearance of Charismatic movements (CMs) on the African church scene in the 1980s and 1990s, and the CMs’ determined attempts to re-invent Christianity rendering the faith relevant to the needs of Africa’s emergent urban élite, is evidence of the depth and creative innovations of Africa’s new Christianity. However, because there is considerable scholarly acrimony about what types of churches are included in the CMs, it will be proper to propose a working definition employed in this article. Defining CMs generally fall under two categories. First, the CM refers to the Charismatic revival that occurred in historic mainline churches and denominations in the 1960s. The most prominent example was Rev. Dennis J. Bennett’s admission at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California, that he had experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This prompted a flurry of confessions from those who had also received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but had chosen to remain as communicant members of those historic denominations. These historic churches that had been affected by this Charismatic renewal are not discussed in this article.

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A second meaning ascribed to the CM refers to those independent Charismatic churches, ministries and networks that developed outside of the Pentecostal Movement or historic missionary and mainline churches from the late 1970s to the present. This new development within the African church context has been variously described as Charismatic, Neo-Charismatic and Neo-Pentecostal churches. Among other theological characteristics, African CMs emphasize divine healing, miracles, demons and exorcism, dreams and their interpretation, prophecy, prosperity, anointing with olive oil and distinguishing between spirits. These churches have a large following among the educated African urban élite. It is this second meaning of CMs in Africa that I examine in this article.

Indeed, the CMs in Africa, whose members are the most enthusiastic Christians on the continent, are involved in local, national, regional and global missions. The movement’s clergy are among the growing army of Christian leaders who are serious about the study of Holy Scripture and are seeking ways by which they can apply the pristine message of the gospel to the changing socio-political context of contemporary Africa. Charismatics see themselves as moral crusaders who are engaged in programs of social action that would lead to political reform. These ecclesiastical developments brought upon the African religious frontier by the CM are certainly new, and thus invite critical investigations to determine whether there are any connecting threads with the theological currents of the past. One might therefore ask: could it be that the African theology envisaged by


Africa’s early theological voices has now reached its point of maturity? Or does this new buoyancy of the Christian faith imply that it should be understood as an unintended theological consequence of the missionary translation project that had seen the Bible translated into many of Africa’s indigenous languages? Or is this a truly new renaissance that desires to express Christianity in ways that make sense, addresses unresolved questions, and enhances the cultural worldview of its youthful urban African elite followers?

These questions lead us back to a careful discussion of the African Christian theology (or Theologia Africana) that was developed at Fourah Bay College by Professor Edward W. Fasholé-Luke after Sierra Leone’s attainment of independence. This theology had called for a church that would make it her desire to promote a theology whose shape, content and feature was not indexed upon imported theologies, but one that is solidly engraved in the hearts and minds of Africans. If this theology was to serve its intended purpose of making the new convert both Christian as well as genuinely and authentically African, then it must be developed by Africans themselves.

The scope of this article is to attempt to draw a connection between Fasholé-Luke’s Theologia Africana and the church context of CMs in Africa. I do so in three ways: first, I offer an exploration of Professor Edward W. Fasholé-Luke’s academic career, situating him in his social setting and discussing how this background shaped his illustrious theological enterprise at Fourah Bay College. Second, I profile Fasholé-Luke’s Theologia Africana contrasting this from the emerging catch phrases that were used to describe the various forms of African theology that were developing in post-colonial Africa. And third, I propose a basis by which Fasholé-Luke’s Theologia Africana can be applied to the context of Africa’s CMs.

Finally, mention should also be made of the methodology with which data were collected for this research. The present study grew out of three field research trips I made to Sierra Leone between January 2011 and May 2013 in respect of my doctoral dissertation. During those trips, I was a participant observer at Charismatic meetings and held interviews with the leaders of the five most
prominent Charismatic churches in Sierra Leone. While my aim was to conduct a detailed historiography of the emergence of CMs and their approach to African culture, prosperity gospel and power theology, it was clear that there were parallels existing between CMs and Fasholé-Luke’s proposal that the church needed a Theologia Africana that was both faithful to Holy Scripture and relevant to the needs of Africa. Consequently, my reference to the current context of CMs in Africa will mainly include examples drawn from the interviews and observations I had with Sierra Leone’s CMs and their leaders. This empirical methodology gives the research the much-deserved local allure and limits its scope to the local context of CMs in Sierra Leone. Although this methodological purview remains the scope of the article, attempts have been made to weave in connecting threads from secondary literature so that the CMs in Sierra Leone could be compared with what obtains elsewhere in Africa.

**Fasholé-Luke’s Academic Career**

Professor Edward William Fasholé-Luke was born and raised in Freetown, Sierra Leone. He comes from the élite Krio ethnic group, who are found in the western area of Sierra Leone. The Krio people (“re-captives” or “liberated Africans”) are descendants of freed black slaves who were resettled in Sierra Leone, the province of freedom, after Great Britain's abolition of the inhumane trade in humans. The Krio people had not only contributed to the early diffusion of Christianity across West Africa, but had established for themselves a distinctively Christian identity in Sierra Leone.

As was the case with all of his contemporaries, Fasholé-Luke began his academic journey at the prestigious CMS Grammar School for boys. After completing

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14 Sierra Leone’s most prominent CMs and leaders include Pastor Francis A. M. Mambu’s Faith Healing Bible Church (founded 1987), Bishop Akintayo Sam-Jolly’s Living Word of Faith Outreach Ministries International (founded 1988), Apostle Mrs. Dora Dumbuya’s Jesus Is Lord Ministries International (founded 1989), Bishop Julius Laggah’s Bethel World Outreach Ministries International (founded 1992) and Bishop Jonathan A. Cole’s New Life Ministries International (founded 1993).


secondary education, he enrolled at Fourah Bay College, where he read theology under the tutelage of Harry Sawyerr. Upon graduating from Fourah Bay College, the young Fasholé-Luke proceeded to England to study for a PhD. His field of specialization was the New Testament and the contours of early Latin Christianity. Although he was urged to abandon his desire to study St. Cyprian’s doctrines of the church and relating those to the African milieu in his doctoral thesis, he was undeterred in his determination. He successfully completed doctoral studies and returned to Sierra Leone to commence his professional career as lecturer of theology at Fourah Bay College. He quickly rose through the ranks to become senior lecturer in theology and later dean, faculty of arts at Fourah Bay College in 1974.

Walking in the footsteps of Andrew Walls, Harry Sawyerr and Lamin Sanneh (all of whom lectured in theology at Fourah Bay College), Fasholé-Luke set out to carve his own theological identity that left large imprints on the sands of time. His lectureship at Fourah Bay College widened the sphere of his theological influence beyond the shores of Sierra Leone. At home he was a leading beacon and champion of the cause of the national churches. An Anglican clergyman, he was instrumental in organizing seminars and in-service training programs for local clergy of the Anglican and Methodist churches. Some of these seminars resulted in publications that were widely circulated in Sierra Leone. Together with Professors Andrew Walls and Harry Sawyerr, Fasholé-Luke sought to develop the academic study of theology in Sierra Leone with the creation of the *Sierra Leone Bulletin of Religion*. Some of his pioneering research articles were peer-reviewed and published in this journal. He also played a crucial role in the formation of the *Sierra Leone Theological College*, an interdenominational ministerial training institution for clergy from Sierra Leone’s Methodist and Anglican churches in 1975.

Having established the pedigree of his theological career in his native Sierra Leone, Fasholé-Luke began to show interest in the wider continental developments and nationalist clamour that had inspired Africa’s independence movements. It was also at this time that young African theologians with sponsorship from the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of

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Churches were beginning to reshape their ideas in the emerging field of African theology. Fasholé-Luke participated in a number of embryonic consultations that were important in the shaping of the emerging identity and future trajectory of the field of African theology. Three of these consultations deserve to be mentioned.

The first of these consultations took place in 1965 in the Nigerian city of Ibadan. Convened by mainly English-speaking West African theologians who were emerging as the leading proponents of African theology, the conference sought to underlie the fact that “African culture had a genuine value and therefore should play a vital role in rendering the Christian faith relevant to Africans.” The papers that were presented at this conference (Ibadan I) were later co-edited by Fasholé-Luke and published under the title *New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World*. This conference prompted another smaller consultation in Ibadan, Nigeria (Ibadan II) which brought together a different group of West African theological educators who were members of the West African Association of Theological Institutions (WAATI). The consultation discussed the theme of “Theology in the West African Context”.

The second theological consultation which attracted the participation of Fasholé-Luke, eventually led to the formation of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) on 12 August 1976. This pivotal event which took place in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania allowed the early prodigies of African Theology to dialogue with peers from other parts of the world. The conference motivated African theologians to ferret out and develop theologies that were relevant to the changing social and cultural context of Africa and its peoples. Spurred by the euphoria of political independence, EATWOT provided a platform that offered young African theologians the chance to develop what became known as African Theology. EATWOT was a group committed to the task of theological work

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25 There are four terms that are associated with this concept: (i) African theology, (ii) black theology, (iii) *Theologia Africana* and (iv) African Christian theology. These terms were mainly used by African theologians who were sympathetic to the views of the Ecumenical movement which was represented by its continental body, All Africa Conference of Churches. African Evangelical theologians were however dissatisfied with the project served by these concepts as there was the feeling that this way of theologising purported a significant departure from biblical and historic Christianity. With the support of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, they developed their
within local church communities, particularly those categorized as “developing” countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The third consultation which was again held in the city of Ibadan, Nigeria where Fasholé-Luke played a pivotal role was the 1976 conference on the theme “Training for the Ministry in West Africa”. This consultation (Ibadan III) which was organized by WAATI brought together English-speaking West African theologians. Taking the cue from Ibadan II, the purpose for this consultation was to discuss the prospect of adopting contextual methods of training the next generation of clergy for the churches of West African. West African theologians felt that the colonial methodologies that continued to be employed at state universities, theological seminaries and Bible colleges across West Africa were believed to be less effective. The result was that African church leaders were not sufficiently equipped to deal with the specific context of West Africa. After the conclusion of the conference (which participants felt was a necessary first step in the growth and development of contextual theological education in West Africa), it was Fasholé-Luke who was tasked with the responsibility of harvesting the discussions and resolutions of the consultation and facilitating their publication under the title that reflects the conference theme. Subsequent WAATI consultations were convened in Freetown at Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone where Fasholé-Luke was based.

Fasholé-Luke’s academic career coincided with the social context of independence which was reverberating across much of the African continent. Even Fasholé-Luke’s native Sierra Leone was among the first African states to successfully negotiate and attain independence from Great Britain on 27 April


1961. The political élite who took over power after independence were educated at mission schools. Some of the leaders of the independence movement even possess higher degrees they had acquired at universities in the western metropolis of their former colonial masters.²⁸ Consequently, his was an era full of hope and excitement that was brought upon the continent by the new sense of self-determination that had been attained at the dawn of independence. African professors who taught at universities were expected to factor into their teaching curriculums those themes that converged with and supported the quest for Africa’s independence movements.²⁹ However, the continuation of white minority rule in much of southern Africa was seen by many African nationalists as an eyesore. Theologians who were sympathetic to the cause of the nationalist movements felt that they could not neglect the plight of fellow oppressed Africans. In Fasholé-Luke’s thinking, African theologians who neglected the plight of fellow Africans who continue to be oppressed are failing in the most basic task of theology.³⁰ Consequently, the prevalence of white minority rule in that part of the African continent led to the development of black theology. This was considered a “theology of the oppressed, by the oppressed, for the liberation of the oppressed”.³¹ Soon, currents from the political arena began to be felt in missionary-founded church circles. When some of these currents fizzled into paroxysms, new churches that longed for autonomy from missionary domination and control were founded.³² A number of these churches were given the description “African independent churches” (AICs). Their creation was poorly received and, in most cases, AICs were seen as protest churches that would not survive beyond the lifespan of their Charismatic founders who went on to become the new leaders. It was not long after that it dawned upon missionary

³² For instance, what is known today as the National Pentecostal Mission Sierra Leone emerged from the 1969 cessation of the Limba people from the missionary cover of the Assemblies of God based in Springfield, Missouri, USA. The same scenario had also occurred at an earlier date when the West African Methodist Church which seceded from the British based Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1884. Leslie E. T. Shyllon, Two Centuries of Christianity in a African Province of Freedom, Sierra Leone: A Case Study of European influence and Culture in Church Development (Freetown, Sierra Leone: Print Sundries and Stationeries, 2008), pp. 75–81; Prince Sorie Conteh, Traditionalists, Muslims and Christians in Africa: Interreligious Encounters and Dialogue (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2009), 95; Joseph Bosco Bangura, The Matrix of African Pentecostal Social Action: A Study of the National Pentecostal Mission Sierra Leone (Brussels: WCM, 2015), p. 75.
churches that these new indigenous churches were poised to continue their ministry, in spite of the caricatures that were used against them.

Africa’s independence produced a number of challenges that impacted Fasholé-Luke’s academic career and the development of his Theologia Africana. First, Christianity, much like colonialism, was still perceived by many African theologians to be a resident alien that had struggled for the incarnation of the gospel in the soil of African culture. Unfortunately however, African Christians were beginning to feel that they were being told what theological questions they must tackle as they carried out the Christian vocation. Fasholé-Luke was therefore inclined to believe that even though the task of Christian theology could not be done in isolation from the witness of the global church, it was however Africans themselves who must shape the agenda and motive of African Christian theologies.33

A second challenge was the impact that translation had on the African church. Although the Bible was translated into many African languages, there was a failure to relate the gospel message to the political, social and cultural milieu of West African peoples. What Fasholé-Luke believed was needed was the interpretation of the Bible by Africans for Africans so that the gospel could be made to speak to the totality of the African human experience. For Fasholé-Luke, Christian theologizing has a responsibility to be loyal to the faith it seeks to express and be relevant to the cultural, political and social environments in which it is produced.34 A third challenge that ensues from the social context of post-independence Africa relates to attempts to assess the usefulness of studying AICs in enhancing our understanding of African Christianity. Because AICs seemed to have innovatively adapted certain aspects of the Christian faith and practice to the African context, Fasholé-Luke believed that such movements deserved to be studied in greater detail.35

Fasholé-Luke’s Theologia Africana
Although African theology has come of age, controversy over the precise meaning of the concept still rages on.36 Perhaps this explains why Fasholé-Luke seems to have evaded the question of definition, arguing instead that African theology was to be differentiated from African Christian theology.37 In order for this to happen,

36 Young III, African Theology, 1.
Fasholé-Luke highlights four themes that he believes were explicitly linked to the concept:

- There is (i) **African theology**, which he regards as “the systematic presentation of the beliefs, ideas and practices of African Traditional Religions”. For him, this description of what constitutes African theology makes the project less Christian and thus grossly inadequate to describe the vocation and calling of African Christian theologians.

- He then cites (ii) **black theology** as another nomenclature that has been associated with the emerging theological field. He describes this as “a theology of the oppressed, by the oppressed, for the liberation of the oppressed”. Again, Fasholé-Luke was not impressed and expressed his reasoned disagreement with the essential ethos of black theology. This was because the introduction of blackness into its theological method suggests the ethnic limitations of the task that black theology sets out to achieve. Fasholé-Luke is convinced that “the Christian gospel is for the oppressed and the oppressor alike. No one can be excluded from the Kingdom of God manifested in Jesus Christ”. While Fasholé-Luke was not insensitive to the obfuscating conditions of oppression blacks have had to endure particularly in the Republic of South Africa, he however believed that just as our African heritage does not allow for the exclusion of anyone from participating in the community, so also are our theologies challenged to rise above the level of ethnic and racial categories.

- Further, Fasholé-Luke introduced the term (iii) **Theologia Africana**. One might misunderstand his assertion that this term appears confusing to mean he is against its continued use in the scholarly debates over African Christianity. On the contrary, Fasholé-Luke notes that given the immense contribution made by Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine and Donatus (all of whom are North African theologians!) toward the development of Latin theology upon which modern western theology is constructed, Theologia Africana may well be a useful description of the project undertaken by current African theologians.

- Finally, Fasholé-Luke proposes the term (iv) **African Christian theology**. Interestingly, he stops short from proffering a definition of this concept.

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What he does is offer a description of its aim which he envisages as one that seeks “to translate the one faith of Jesus Christ to suit the tongue, style, genus, character and culture of African peoples”.  

Let me at this juncture offer a tentative concluding comment. One gets the impression that Fasholé-Luke appears to be rather pessimistic about the merits of using terms like African theology and black theology as phrases that describe the enterprising vocation that had been undertaken by African Christian theologians after the attainment of independence. By alluding to the need for African Christian theologians to use the rich Christian heritage of the western churches, one is led to the belief that Fasholé-Luke’s African Christian theology could well be paralleled with his understanding of Theologia Africana. Consequently, this article uses African Christian theology and Theologia Africana interchangeably.

After having established the parameters of his Theologia Africana, Fasholé-Luke goes on to suggest four sources that are fundamental in constructing a genuine and authentic African Christian theology. The first source Fasholé-Luke proposes is that the Bible should be the primary basis for the development of African Christian theologies. Even though many will agree with him on this point, Fasholé-Luke however bemoans the bland nature and lack of depth of biblical scholarship available to the African churches. Africa, he argues, does not only have few theologians, but even fewer biblical scholars. This shallow trend needs to be reversed if African churches are to continue growing. For Fasholé-Luke, there can be no proper Christian theologizing in an African context without depending upon the inflexible work of “first-rate biblical scholars, competent in the biblical languages, as well as the social, political and cultural conditions of the biblical period”. It is only by immersing oneself in the faultless word of God can the church in Africa produce Christians who are convicted of sin, assured of salvation and victory over evil powers and convinced of a place in heaven.

The second source for doing Theologia Africana is for the African Christian theologian to harness the religious traditions and philosophies of African Traditional Religion (ATR) in doing theology. By offering this opinion on ATR, Fasholé-Luke is well aware that his suggestion may be susceptible to possible misinterpretation. He was therefore quick to dispel any ambiguity that might brand him as one who belonged to the group of African theologians who are calling for the Old Testament to be replaced with ATR while doing Christian

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theology. If this were to be the case, Fasholé-Luke reasons that the theologian would not have a genuine understanding of the unique revelation of Jesus Christ, who became incarnated in a first-century Jewish context as prophesied in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament. Such a theology would be “sterile, bankrupt and unworthy of the African tradition which nourished Tertullian, Cyprian and Augustine”. The reason for which Africa’s religious traditions were rejected in the past was because western missionaries had stressed discontinuity between Christianity and African cultures. New converts were urged to shed off all cultural accretions after becoming Christians. By so doing, ATR had not received any proper evaluation under the missionary era.

This scenario need not be the case if indigenous Africans are actively involved in the process of theologizing. African Christian theologians are challenged to critically examine their cultural and religious traditions to see what aspects will be adopted to properly express the Christian faith, and what aspects are to be discarded.

Third, given that the task of Christian theology in Africa cannot be done in isolation from the witness of the global church, African Christian theologies must learn from the theological heritage of the western churches. This source is quite appealing to Fasholé-Luke because the Christian theology that had been developed by the western churches was in fact shaped by African theological giants such as Tertullian, Cyprian and Augustine. He therefore rejects the aspirations that had been directed against the applicability of western theology for the growth of African churches. Dialogue with western theology was therefore a worthy enterprise that will positively enrich the emerging field of African Christian theology. This approach, Fasholé-Luke believes, seeks to create a synthesis between the Christian African and western heritage as well as guard against the tendency of western churches to dominate and set the theological agenda of the African churches.

The fourth source that Fasholé-Luke suggests as a useful tool that can assist African theologians in doing Theologia Africana is to look at the creative innovations of AICs. Perhaps this suggestion reveals Fasholé-Luke’s boldest contribution to the discourse of using the cultural and religious traditions of Africans in developing a theology suitable for the African church. But this

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47 Parratt, Reinventing Christianity: African Theology Today, 44.
suggestion is not without difficulties, because at their founding AICs were not able to develop consistent biblical theologies for their churches. Even Fasholé-Luke acknowledges that there are genuine dangers that point to the possible entry of error in the teaching of some AICs. While the possibility of erroneous teaching must not be overlooked in AICs, Fasholé-Luke is still convinced that these indigenous churches must however be carefully and critically assessed if their usefulness for doing theology in Africa is to be more clearly established.54

Charismatic Appropriation of Fasholé-Luke’s Theologia Africana

Is there a basis by which Fasholé-Luke’s Theologia Africana can be applied to the church context of CMs in Africa? Notwithstanding the historical and socio-cultural contexts that characterize the era of decolonisation and independence of Africa when he wrote, it is my contention that Fasholé-Luke’s Theologia Africana can be useful in analysing CMs in Africa today. Fasholé-Luke’s Theologia Africana could indeed broaden our understanding of the changing context of church and pastoral ministry we have witnessed in the African religious frontier after the emergence of CMs. In this section, I use Fasholé-Luke’s four sources to illustrate the applicability of his Theologia Africana in the contexts of church and pastoral ministry of CMs in Sierra Leone.

First, Fasholé-Luke did affirm that Theologia Africana must be based on a carefully thought-out biblical theology. However, the limited supply of highly trained African Bible scholars makes him wonder whether this would be an achievable venture. He calls on the churches to invest in the training and development of Bible scholars who are capable of producing the source material that is so urgently needed for the development of high quality African Christian theology.55 It would not be an overstatement to aver that Africa’s CMs are people who are easily recognized for their intense love of the Bible. Among CMs in Africa, Bible reading functions as a repository of narratives that impact directly upon the life of the individual Christian.56 Power encounter passages of the Bible speak directly to the daily experiences of life. Africa’s newer CMs have shown this by their dedication to and use of the Bible in preaching, Bible study, seminars, prayer and fasting sessions, and the conferences they organize. When they use the Bible in church and pastoral ministry, Africa’s CMs cautiously avoid any

involvement in theological controversies (such as those related to biblical inerrancy or soteriology) that they believe undermines evangelism and the credibility of Holy Scripture.\textsuperscript{57} This is why CMs were initially suspicious about the precise motives that are served by the academic study of theology.\textsuperscript{58} Instead, CMs chose rather to engage in theologizing that is largely non-academic, local and emerges from the grassroots.\textsuperscript{59} Even in the ministerial training institutes set up by CMs (such as Bishop Laggah’s Bethel Bible Institute), the curriculum only emphasizes what they perceive to be careful teaching based on the Bible. The Bible is the main text quoted by Charismatic church members for private and public use. Bible verses can be found pasted on the doors of homes, offices and business establishments or used as bumper stickers on cars. In essence, Africa’s CMs are best described as people who “love the Bible”.\textsuperscript{60}

Nevertheless, there is as yet no deep biblical scholarship among Sierra Leone’s CMs. This shallow nature of the CMs’ scholarship, particularly one that lacks rigorous grounding in the biblical languages as well as the social and political context of the biblical period, tends to cast misgivings against the movement’s use of the Bible. Besides this, Fasholé-Luke’s reasoning that Theologia Africana should be expressed using the vernacular languages of Africa appears not to have been taken up by Africa’s newer CMs. For Fasholé-Luke, expressing theology in English or French diminishes or even leads to a loss of the distinctive categories of African religious thought forms.\textsuperscript{61} This is why he believes the translation of the Bible into African indigenous languages has been one success story of the missionary expedition in Africa. African CMs have opted for a different way of expressing their faith. The use of indigenous Bible translations has not resonated well with the spiritual sensibilities of Africa’s newer Charismatic church movements. This may well be explained by the fact that the great majority of the


\textsuperscript{58} Matthews A. Ojo, \textit{The End-Time Army: Charismatic Movements in Modern Nigeria} (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2006), 191; Anderson, \textit{An Introduction to Pentecostalism}, 245.

\textsuperscript{59} It was Andrew Walls who observed that the seismic shift of global Christianity to countries of the southern hemisphere does suggest that the theologies to be expected from there will be essentially practical in nature. Such occasional and local theologies would be addressing those issues that deeply affect the lives of numbers of people in their local setting. Perhaps this might be what is happening in the contexts of CMs in Africa. Andrew Walls, \textit{The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith} (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996).

\textsuperscript{60} Peter D. Hocken, “Charismatic Movements”, in Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. Van der Maas (eds), \textit{The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 514–15.

members of the movement have high levels of education, with some even having acquired university degrees. For this urban and sociologically enlightened constituency, English is the preferred language used by Charismatic clergy in preaching, worship services and pastoral counselling sessions. Religious products (such as prayer shawls, books, audio and video CDs) are distributed in English or French. The leaders of the movements are even present on social media. Their fluency in English or French and their itinerary of frequent international travels represents the global appeal of their ministries.

A second area where Fasholé-Luke’s Theologia Africana can be applied to the specific context of CMs in Africa is his call to use the philosophies of ATR in constructing a Christian theology that is suitable to Africa. Africa’s CMs have been very effective in their creative use of the worldview and cultural themes of Africa. In particular, we find that Charismatic church practices are full of reference to the existence of demons, evil spirits and witches whose primary intent is to thwart human flourishing. Further, Charismatics believe that their new faith in Christ possesses capacity to usher them into a life of prosperity. Thus, at conversion, the new believer in Christ is expected to sever all ties with their traditional and cultural past, which for the most part is considered demonic. This radical break with one’s traditional past that is exhibited at conversion accords the new convert the opportunity to experience newness of life mediated by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The leading Charismatic figure in Sierra Leone whose ministry best represents this integration of cultural themes into church life and pastoral ministry is Bishop Jonathan Cole, presiding prelate of New Life Ministries International. In his 1999 book, The Devil, Demons and Demonology, Bishop Cole, using themes drawn from Sierra Leone’s traditions and Holy Scripture, recognizes the austere presence of demons and evil spirits whose primary intent is to wreak havoc on people. In Christ, Bishop Cole argues, the born again believer is both delivered from this debilitating grip of demons and empowered to excel in every vocation of life.

I must note here that, although CMs advocate for discontinuity with their cultural past, they have been most innovative in their attempts to integrate those themes in African cultures that are congruent with their understanding of Holy Scripture.

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64 Kalu, African Pentecostalism, 259.
These adiaphoric aspects of African culture have been carefully integrated into their strategy for pastoral ministry. For instance, during baby dedication and marriage ceremonies organized at Jesus Is Lord Ministries, Apostle Mrs Dora Dumbaya encourages the whole congregation to materially support the new parents and couple as they commemorate important lifecycle events. In a culture where the individual’s identity is meaningfully enriched by their participation in community life, this attempt by Apostle Dumbuya is proving useful and is attracting a lot more people to her church. Because Charismatics are able to define areas in African cultures where human flourishing may be hampered, the movement is able to gain a large following among the urban African élite who share this worldview. It does appear that African Charismatics are able to “apprehend African spiritual values with the African mind, while at the same time they possess the requisite knowledge of the fundamental facts of the faith”.67

For many, themes of health, wealth and power are crucial factors that are frequently discussed. Success in life is defined by a person’s ability to excel in these three areas and an indication of the harmony existing between them and the spirit realm. Consequently, churches in Africa that desire to make inroads among people who subscribe to a traditional worldview must take into consideration the impact that such worldviews have in the lives of new converts. Where the church does not seek to integrate these themes in her strategy for pastoral ministry, their members would be tempted to seek alternative solutions by which they can have their deeply felt spiritual needs met. We should not lose sight of the fact that it is through an African religious and traditional worldview that Christianity is received.68 This worldview shapes the expression of the Christian faith among African CMs. African Christians are challenged not to shy away from using African categories to render church and pastoral ministry effective.69 One only hopes that the CMs’ use of themes that are derived from African culture will be biblically conscientious.

Third, Fasholé-Luke states further that Theologia Africana needs to dialogue with and use categories drawn from the rich heritage of the western churches. It is my considered view that Africa’s newer Charismatics appear to have heeded Fasholé-Luke’s call in this respect. CMs in Sierra Leone are seeking ways through which they can use the rich heritage of western churches. Given their limited level of education and possibly their repulsion against the perceived excesses of

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western missionary domination, using the heritage of western Christianity was not an interesting endeavour taken up by the founders of AICs. In marked contrast, Sierra Leone’s CMs have frequently referred to church fathers and reformers in their sermons. Bishops Julius Laggah and Akintayo Sam-Jolly both aver that their use of reformers is an indication of the new reformation they are mediating. They argue that the aim of this new reformation is to make the Christian faith relevant to the needs of the movement’s younger African urban elite members, inspiring in them love for the Bible and desire for the infilling and renewal of the Holy Spirit. This time, however, the reform is not anchored in grandiose theological concepts, but in applying the message of the Christian gospel to the African local context, refining and/or enhancing the traditional and cultural worldviews of its members. The overall objective is not to construct abstract doctrinal formulations derived from church fathers and reformers. Rather, using them as prototypes, Sierra Leone’s CMs emphasize that their revival is a kind of reformation that leads the church back to Holy Scripture, experience of salvation in Christ Jesus and fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the life of believers. Because of their firm belief in mediating spiritual revival, African Charismatics have even taken upon themselves the challenge of re-evangelizing members from mainline and traditional churches, as well as seeking new converts for the Kingdom of God.

Fourth, Fasholé-Luke should be commended for suggesting that AICs must be systematically studied to ascertain the precise contribution they are likely to make in the development of Theologia Africana. Fasholé-Luke’s call, set at a time when AICs were being lampooned for what was considered a shallow display of mainly syncretistic theology, needs elaboration. There is no denying the fact that AICs have been very innovative in their attempt to readapt Christianity to suit the “tongue, style, genus, character and culture of African peoples” emphasized by Fasholé-Luke. This expression of faith portrayed by AICs indicates to a certain extent the themes that are important in understanding the evolving tapestry of African Christianity. Unfortunately, this aspect of AICs was ignored. AICs were largely regarded as a baby to be thrown away with its bathwater.

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70 Peter Hocken and James Logan have both cited this experience as an inclination of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements where they tend to use church fathers and reformers in preaching, albeit despairingly. See Peter Hocken, *The Challenges of the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Messianic Jewish Movements: The Tensions of the Spirit* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 33; James Logan, “Controversial Aspects of the Movement”, in Michael Pollock Hamilton (ed.), *The Charismatic Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 34.


Just as it was in Fasholé-Luke’s time of writing, when the CMs emerged, they were caricatured as being seriously deficient in their biblical and theological basis. Some of these CMs were even accused of sheep stealing from traditional and mainline denominations. This situation no longer holds true because CMs are serious about studying theology and contributing to the debate that shapes public and private life in those communities where they minister. At New Life Ministries International, Bishop Cole makes it a prerequisite that those who are put up for ordination need to be educated up to a bachelor’s degree in theology from an accredited college or university. Furthermore, the AICs of Fasholé-Luke’s day were not part of the Christian council of churches in many African states. This rigid stance which prevented AICs from becoming members of Christian councils was because accepting them amounted to compromising the purity of the Christian gospel, theology and church ministry that had been impressed upon the African church by its missionary pioneers. Presently, CMs are not only members of national Christian councils, they have also established separate church organizations such as the Pentecostal Fellowship of Sierra Leone (PFSL) founded in 2002 and the Strategic Evangelistic Network (SEN) Sierra Leone founded in 2010. These Charismatic church organizations continue to shape the emerging ecclesial identity of CMs as they dialogue and cooperate with other church organizations. In Sierra Leone, Charismatic church leaders are now also being recognized by the central government for their immense indigenous contribution to the cause of Christianity and human fraternity. Bishop Tamba A. Koroma (National Pentecostal Mission), Apostle Mrs. Dora Dumbuya (Jesus Is Lord Ministries), Bishop Jonathan A. Cole (New Life Ministries International) and Bishop Fredrick Abu Koroma (Fleming Evangelical Ministries International) have all been recipients of the national insignia, Officer of the Order of the Rekel. This award is a coveted national laurel that the president of the republic confers upon worthy citizens who are believed to have excelled themselves in their various professional fields, positively impacting the nation through their work. The award is usually given on 27 April during annual commemorations marking Sierra Leone’s independence.

Conclusion
The attempt to relate Fasholé-Luke’s Theologia Africana to the church and pastoral ministry contexts of CMs in Africa certainly feeds into a number of concluding remarks. Three of these and the questions they raise are discussed below.

First, could it be that African theology has indeed come of age? Although one might hesitate to answer this question in the affirmative, the facts on the ground
speak for themselves. It is my thinking that the hopes and aspirations of an African church that was competent enough to meet the needs of Africans, (which was predicted by the progenitors of African theology), are now been essentially fulfilled among Africa’s CMs. However, Africa’s newer CMs are aware of the limitations embedded in the theologies promoted by AICs. The newer CMs have been able to surmount some of these theological challenges by promoting a faith that ensures the possibility for one to be Christian and African, without losing the fundamental nature of the Christian gospel. Nevertheless, one should not be oblivious to the fact that some of their localized theologies, chief among which is the prosperity gospel, have also been the subject of parody among scholars and churches. Due to the fact that the movement lacks sufficient biblical depth to ground its prosperity theologies, as well as the conditions of extreme poverty and deprivation in which the teaching usually thrives, the movement continues to stir intense controversy over its prosperity doctrines.

Second, the growth of literacy programs in most African nations and the higher level of education achieved by its youthful urban élite have surprisingly led to a quest for spirituality that seems to be satisfied by the CMs. While the translation project enabled African Christians to identify areas that enhanced their worldview, education seems to have been a cause that precipitates the urban élite’s yearning for deeper Christian spirituality. Through its innovative church and pastoral ministries, CMs are presenting themselves as Charismatic champions who are able to respond to the spiritual needs of its educated members.

Third, in every age, converts to Christianity often seek ways by which they can render the new-found faith relevant to their needs. Although AICs were accused of falling prey to syncretism, it would be unfair to completely disregard their efforts at contextualization as a non-starter. In their own way, this was an attempt to make the faith relevant to their needs. Like AICs, CMs are also open to a number of criticisms. One gets the impression that some parallels exist between AICs in colonial Africa and CMs in contemporary Africa. Although the CMs are criticized for uncritically preaching prosperity theologies, it can be argued that they are also attempting to re-adapt the Christian faith to the changing socio-cultural contexts of its highly educated and urban élite church members. I contend that this attempt needs to be recognized if Christian theologians are interested in widening the impact of the church in contemporary Africa. In the words of Fasholé-Luke, one may conclude that the CMs’ attempt to establish an intercultural church and pastoral ministry that is biblically meticulous, are
intended “to translate the one faith of Jesus Christ to suit the tongue, style, genus, character and culture of African peoples”\textsuperscript{73}.

Chapter 2
Charismatic Healing and the Ebola Crisis

Introduction
When the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) washed up on the shores of Sierra Leone in May 2014, little medical knowledge was available about the deadly nature of the virus. The country’s hospitals were ill equipped and grossly unprepared to deal with any crisis, let alone the one to which the country was suddenly thrust. In a matter of days, the whole healthcare system simply collapsed, resulting in uncontrollable chains of transmission. As it became apparent that the crisis was a matter of life and death, the central government declared a state of national health emergency. Because healing is part of the perpetual quest for self-preservation, the nation went in search of any help it could find as it struggled to contain the virus. The government’s eclectic approach is not surprising because in every human culture, interest in the restoration of healing and wellbeing when health fails is always a priority.1 The nation’s teaming healing evangelists (discussed later in this study) along with other faith leaders were quick to argue that witchcraft and demonic forces were responsible for the Ebola outbreak. They went on to prescribe bathing with salt water, smearing imported holy water and anointing oil on one’s body, participating in midnight prayer vigils and three days of fasting for national repentance as remedial measures that would rid the land of this Ebola scourge. Instead of getting better, the crisis grew worse. By December 2014, this previously unknown mythical monster had fully arisen from its cave to demand more human blood and sacrifice.2 Borders were closed, foreign expatriates withdrew, and multinational corporations shut down operations. Major airline companies announced the indefinite suspension of flights into and out of the affected countries. Sierra Leoneans were left at the mercy of a venomous virus whose lethal invincibility eludes the naked eye. And the rate of new infections and death in the belligerent hands of Ebola kept rising.

1 Frederick J. Gaiser, Healing in the Bible: Theological Insight for Christian Ministry (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 36.
As indicated earlier, healing is a crucial aspect of every human culture. And Sierra Leone’s culture is clearly no exception. To make sense of the tragedy at the height of Ebola, the thoughts about health developed by healing evangelists drew attention to the connection between the Bible and local cultural context. In fact, the upsurge of Pentecostalism seems to have deepened awareness about the activities of Satan, demons and evil spirits and the need for healing and deliverance in African Christianity. Thus, this mystifying enemy who by now was leaving a trail of excruciatingly painful death and hopelessness, got the nation thinking about what actually went wrong. To what could we possibly attribute the cause of this national calamity that had outclassed the rebel war? Could it be that Ebola represents some sort of punishment from God for sin in the church and the terrible wrong doing in the land? How coherent is the African spiritual explanation that attributes Ebola to the work of evil spiritual forces who have angrily visited the land to collect their long overdue supply of blood and human sacrifices? How has Charismatic spirituality helped the churches deal with the crisis and cope with the impact of the outbreak? These questions were part of the broad interpretations peddled by healing evangelists and bought by a public whose paranoia about Ebola was now understandably beyond comprehension.

Against this background, the purpose of this article is to explore these questions and fill a gap in our understanding of the Charismatic Movement’s approaches to outbreaks such as Ebola and the African need for healing. I probe these questions using four steps. First, the article provides an overview of the state of healthcare prior to Ebola, discussing its statistical toll on the nation and impact on the health of survivors. Second, I examine the cultural precedents that drives Sierra Leone’s value system so that traditional causes to disease, ill health and death and the need to care for the sick and dying could be established. Further, it considers the challenges brought upon the cultural value of care for the sick and dying by Ebola. The third step articulates how healing evangelists use the biblical material to explain the causes of pestilence and strange diseases among God’s covenant people. Fourth, the article examines Charismatic spirituality in the face Ebola, situating the underlying African spirituality that helped the churches deal biblically and contextually with emergencies and disasters. The article concludes


with an evaluation of Charismatic hermeneutical and cultural interpretations of the Ebola crisis.

Finally, my use of the term Charismatic Movements (CMs) require definition. Broadly defined, CMs refer to two perspectives in which the baptism in the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts were experienced. First, the term is used in reference to the revival movements that occurred in mainline denominations particularly in North America from the 1960s onwards. A second meaning refers to the development particularly in the non-western world of independent Charismatic churches, ministries and networks outside of classical Pentecostalism and historic missionary and mainline churches. In West Africa, this church development which began among university students in the 1970s and 1980s, has become the most vibrant form of Christianity on the African continent. As a polycentric phenomenon with different beginnings, Africa’s newer CMs are constantly reinventing and reinvigorating their ministries. The movements are attracting the younger African urban élite and are reproducing themselves among African communities in Europe and North America. This article uses the second meaning of the term with localized examples drawn from Charismatic church contexts in Sierra Leone.

Ebola: the visit of an unwanted and overdue enemy
If we are to fully comprehend the mayhem brought upon Sierra Leone by Ebola, we must begin with a sense of where the country stood as far as poverty is concerned. Sierra Leone's poverty is a travesty of the abundant natural resources of this tiny West African country. With a population of six million, this country should be a bastion of bliss. Sierra Leone produces among the world’s finest diamonds. In addition, there are plentiful deposits of iron ore, gold, bauxite and rutile. The land is fertile and suitable for agriculture with lush vegetation, forestry and fresh supply of water. The annual pattern of rainfall is adequately suited to support the raring of livestock and enhancing commercial agricultural activities. Fisheries and marine resources along the Atlantic coastline and the inland rivers are in great supply. There is even talk from a recently concluded geological survey that there is likely a huge off-shore oil deposit along the

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Atlantic coast. All of these natural resources would make Sierra Leone a paradise for its citizens. Unfortunately, its people are consistently classified among the poorest in the world. For instance, the 2014 Human Development Index indicates that Sierra Leone ranked 177 out of 187 countries surveyed by the report. Life expectancy from birth is estimated at 45.8 years for women and 45.3 years for men. 72.7% of the population is living in what is described as multidimensional poverty. This means that very few citizens have access to quality education, health care and living standards. Gender inequality, poor reproductive health facilities and high maternal mortality rate makes Sierra Leone one of the worst countries to be born. To compound these woes, Sierra Leone was torn apart by a horrendous rebel war that rampaged the nation throughout the 1990s. Sierra Leone only recently began rebuilding her democratic institutions when the Ebola outbreak occurred.

West Africa's Ebola outbreak began in December 2013 after a five-year-old boy died of a strange ailment (now known to be Ebola) in Meliandou village, deep in the forest region of Guinea. His death ignited uncontrollable chains of transmission that went on to engulf his siblings, village and country. Given the porous borders in this region of West Africa, rigid cultural practices, coupled with the fragile systems of communication in these post-conflict countries, the disease quickly spread to Liberia and Sierra Leone. These conditions created a conducive environment for such a catastrophic outbreak, with the World Health Organization estimating that Ebola has claimed 11,315 lives, 3589 of whom are Sierra Leoneans. Until its recent arrival, Ebola was an unknown disease in this region of West Africa. Nevertheless, this outbreak became notorious because it is the deadliest ever outbreak to have occurred in countries with the poorest access to basic healthcare on the African continent. Featherstone adds that the outbreak also stands apart from previous outbreaks, because it was predominantly urban-based rather than rural in nature.


Ebola is a member of the *fivovidae* family of viruses that cause hemorrhagic fevers. The virus is named after a river in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where it was first identified in 1976. Although the scientific facts are as yet inconclusive, Ebola's reservoir is thought to be in several species of fruit bats found in the rain forest regions of Central and West Africa.\(^{11}\) As a viral illness, Ebola's initial symptoms can include sudden fever, intense weakness, muscle pain and sore throat. The patient's condition deteriorates rapidly, resulting in vomiting, diarrhoea, internal and external bleeding through the orifices, multiple organ failure and eventually death. Ebola easily spreads between humans by direct contact with infected blood, bodily fluids or organs, or indirectly through contact with contaminated environments.\(^ {12}\) A simple hand shake with an infected person, which many people consider a vital mode of social interaction, can signal death. When someone infested with Ebola dies, the corpse becomes highly contagious. Accordingly, health workers have to wear personal protective equipment while treating patients and safely burying the dead. The incubation period can last from two days to three weeks. Although there has been swift trial of promising vaccines, there is no known cure for Ebola and diagnosis is often difficult because some people are asymptomatic. Patients who recover from the disease are known to suffer from very debilitating post-Ebola symptoms like loss of eye sight, persistent headaches and joint pains, among others.\(^ {13}\) These survivors were also stigmatized because many feared that they might still spread Ebola in the community.\(^ {14}\)

Indeed, one would argue that the exponential spread of Ebola in Sierra Leone and the West African sub-region could be attributed to the weak health systems in the three worst affected countries. Other factors are the strong traditional beliefs of people, their mistrust of western medicine, the traditions of care for the sick, burial practices, and the intense movement of infected people within countries and borders. The trail of death, fear and hopelessness this monster left makes many argue that Ebola is an unwanted and overdue stranger. The outbreak of this disease has had a significant social, economic, cultural and religious impact.


\(^{14}\) A. Featherstone, *Keeping the Faith*, 36.
on the nation such that it will certainly take many years to fully rebuild.\textsuperscript{15} In fact, many people in the region now believe that the war years were far better, because, at least the rebels could be summoned to the table for peace talks. With Ebola’s subtlety, people are much more exposed to the danger and risk of contracting the virus. In the midst of such despicable human suffering, people tend to turn to traditional African cultural practices in search of meaning.

African culture, disease and death

Disasters usually urge people to consult religious leaders as they search for meaning that makes sense amidst life’s most complex happenings. The explanations they look for, tend to be either coherent with or enhance existing African traditional worldviews about disease, ill health and death. Because faith leaders are generally held in high esteem, they often play a very visible role in the business of daily life. Mobilizing and involving faith leaders who are members of the local community was identified as a major game changer in the fight against Ebola.\textsuperscript{16} During the Ebola crisis, several interpretations were proffered by faith leaders as plausible explanations for the unfolding health catastrophe into which the nation was plunged. Even among the many healing evangelists, there was an urge to adopt interpretations that were informed by the cultural contexts of the people caught up in the crisis. That being the case, one might ask: what is the perspective of Sierra Leone’s African culture regarding outbreaks such as strange diseases and death?

To understand disease and death among Sierra Leone’s cultures,\textsuperscript{17} it is necessary to begin with a discussion of the centrality of the human person. Sierra Leone’s traditions reserve a special place for the human person, who only fully assert

\textsuperscript{16} A. Featherstone, Keeping the Faith, 10.
their being in concert with other beings. Further, the human being is considered a spiritual being whose life begins and ends with the Supreme Being. Human life finds meaning in the clan which embraces the living, the dead and the unborn. The life of the individual is not thought of in terms of separate existence, but as an important facet of the community. Thus, throughout the lifecycle (i.e. birth, puberty, marriage and death) rites of passage have to be carefully observed that prepare persons to meaningfully participate in and contribute to community cohesion. These sacred ceremonies convey the idea that human life is involved in a holistic journey which begins and ends with the Supreme Being who must be consulted throughout this journey.

Human flourishing is to be desired and pursued at all times by both individuals and the community. Any activity which brings misfortune and destroys the sacredness and centrality of the human person must be avoided at all costs. Laws and taboos which protect the individual and the community have been put in place. This provision opens the possibility for the existence of witchcraft. Witchcraft, which represents the manipulation of powers to cause havoc is the highest form of evil in society. Harry Sawyerr sees witchcraft as ‘representing the selfish desire that deprives another person of his power-force.’ Ruth Finnegan notes that in Limba cosmology, witchcraft in effect represents the worst forms of anti-social behaviour. Witches, who can be male or female, are believed to use different forms (such as strange diseases and unexplainable death) to perpetuate mischief and evil in society. Thus, witchcraft is always blamed for the occurrence of unexplainable evil. As such, evil combined with witchcraft leads to the diminution of one’s power-force.

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23 Harry Sawyerr, *Creative Evangelism*.
Because of the pervasive nature that witchcraft and evil personify, every effort has to be taken to ensure that people who need to be protected from the diabolical activities perpetrated by witches and evil spirits receive that protection. This is usually done by wearing protective charms, amulets and by hanging some of these on the rooftops of their homes. Sometimes it is also done by drinking or rubbing on one’s body concocted herbs called manesi by the Temne people. In all these cases, people have to consult sacred specialists who diagnose the cause of suffering or illness and prescribe curative measures that must be taken against the diabolical activities of witchcraft.

Even though great care is often taken to protect human life, people do fall sick and they eventually die. Such occasions prompt an intensification of human protection to ensure that the power-force of life that witchcraft and evil wants to destroy is enhanced. Good health suggests that the individual is living in harmony with the physical and spiritual world. When sickness strikes, healing is sought so that the destructive agent that has brought spiritual, personal and social disharmony is eliminated. Two questions show how serious healing is in culture. Firstly, illness and personal misfortune usually demand answers as to why this has happened. Sierra Leoneans believe that sicknesses are not mere occurrences, they indicate underlying spiritual mishaps. People fall sick because: (i) the ancestors have been offended and their desires abandoned by surviving relatives; (ii) clan taboos have been violated; or (iii) unscrupulous people have bewitched their siblings because they fear they are becoming more successful than them. Causes such as these bring misfortune on community life and obstruct human flourishing. Secondly, when the precise cause of illness has been found, people would resort to ways of healing. It is at this time that the services of sacred specialists are contracted to help ascertain the precise cause of illness and effect cure. The sacred specialists will engage in a process of divination that may last for a couple of days. The sick person will be told to offer sacrifices that appease ancestors and malevolent spirits and restore broken relationships among affected parties. Further, herbal medication will be prescribed at the completion of the process of divination. The sick person will be offered other

26 W. Tom Harris and Harry Sawyerr, *The Springs of Mende Belief and Conduct*, 75.
forms of ritual purification in order to perfect healing and prevent the recurrence of any such illness in the future. This process of healing may also constitute herbal medicines that are used for curative and protective purposes.\(^{32}\)

Persons who die while undergoing healing rituals are to be given culturally appropriate burial rites. Traditionally, death does not end human life. Death is transitory, possessing the power to usher persons from a state of physical existence to one that is spiritual. Even though the dead are believed to be spatially living in the abode of their graves, they continue to exist as real spiritual beings in the world of the living dead. Death and burial rites are events that can go on for days. Traditional death and burial rituals always require the full participation of the entire community. Because Sierra Leoneans are hugely loyal to their cultures, when Ebola arrived people were unwilling to part with cultural practices that allowed the safe passage of the dead to the world of the ancestors. These traditional practices soon became the linchpin that accelerated the spread of Ebola among the citizens. As Featherstone\(^ {33}\) points out, the fact that many of the precautions needed to prevent the spread of Ebola conflicted with deeply rooted cultural practices, containing the virus became a huge impediment. This meant that faith leaders and healing evangelists were to be brought on board if the nation was to win the war against Ebola.

**Healing evangelists on pestilence and strange diseases among God’s covenant people**

Even before the Ebola outbreak, access to basic healthcare was not readily available. As such, those who fall sick turn either to traditional healers or the newly established Charismatic faith healing centres that began appearing on the church scene in the 1990s. The formation of *Freetown Bible Training Centre* by Russ Tatro, and the use of this centre for the distribution of Charismatic doctrines such as health, wealth and power across the nation was a pivotal event in the development of the doctrine of divine healing. At *Freetown Bible Training Centre*, Tatro taught that the Christian life was a life engaged in power encounter. Believers are always at war with spiritual forces and evil in high place who are seeking to destroy life. In order for believers to continue to experience good health, spiritual power that causes misfortune, ill health and death must therefore change hands. Those who are born again are transported from a place where they are susceptible to demonic attacks, to a place that gives them spiritual and physical immunity.\(^ {34}\) Faith healing centres were the places to go to


acquire healing, deliverance and spiritual power. The latter became more attractive because these centres combined biblical and African traditional approaches to disease, healing and human wellbeing.

Charismatic healing evangelists are known to affirm that when Christians fall sick, it is their faith in Christ, rather than the medication they take, that brings healing. Faith healers defend their practice by referring to evidence drawn from their reading of the Scriptures. For instance, in his teaching on ‘Redemption, Health and Healing,’ Pastor Francis A. M. Mambu founder and general overseer of Faith Healing Bible Church attests:

Sickness in whatever form is of the devil. God calls it captivity (Job 42:10); Jesus calls it bondage (Luke 13:12 and 16); and the Holy Spirit calls it oppression (Acts 10:38). The victory of Jesus is our victory. He did nothing for himself. He conquered sin, Satan, disease and sickness on our behalf. He shares his victory with all who repent and believe on his name. He bore our infirmities, sicknesses and diseases so that we could claim full release and deliverance.35

Given this background, four premises underlie the assessment of healing evangelists about pestilence and strange diseases among God’s covenant people. In what follows, I use Charismatic church leaders to illustrate how they employ the biblical material to understand the Ebola crisis.

The first of these is sin against God (Amos 3:2, Jeremiah 14:10, Ezekiel 18:4, Micah 2:3 and Romans 2:9). This view was popularized by the Charismatic revivalist preacher, Apostle Moses Kay, who is widely known for his monthly "Fire for Fire" crusades. As founder of Battle Axe Ministries International and chairman of the Alliance of Full Gospel Ministers Sierra Leone, Apostle Moses Kay regards sin as the primary causation of God’s anger. For him, human suffering which can come in the form of strange diseases and pestilences, is invariably linked to human fault. Sin affects the believer’s prayer life and prevents their prayers from being answered (Psalm 66:18, Deuteronomy 1:42; 1 Samuel 8:8 and James 4:4). Sin ambushes God’s abundant supply of grace and the release of his blessings on the life of the born-again child of God. This reading coheres with ancient Israel’s understanding of the relationship which they saw existed between sin and human suffering. Frederick Gaiser36 reminds us that for ancient Israel, it was virtually impossible to exclude God’s place as actor in the events of life.

36 Frederick Gaiser, Healing in the Bible, 9 – 10.
Second, healing evangelists also regard rebellion against God's laws and servants as causes for pestilence and diseases among God's covenant people. This perspective was championed by Apostle Israel B. Momo, founder and general overseer of Living Stone Evangelistic Ministries. Apostle Momo represents the younger generation of Charismatic healing evangelists who merges biblical teaching with African culture and is gaining a steady following in Sierra Leone. Using the account in Numbers 11, Apostle Momo argues that Israel's rebellion against God and Moses resulted in their death at the hands of serpents. In his view, Sierra Leoneans are at the mercy of the venomous claws of Ebola primarily because of their rebellion against God and his servants. Ebola, opines Apostle Momo, is the contemporary serpent whom God is using to call attention to the presence of sin and rebellion in the church and nation. In just the same way as Israel cried out to God in their distress, Sierra Leone must turn to God in sombre reflection, fasting and penitential prayer so that the land will be rid of Ebola (Joel 2:12-14).

Third, Satan and his legion of demonic forces also account for pestilence and diseases. Trumpeted by Apostle Emric Webber, founder and general overseer of Cornerstone Ministries, (aka The Rock Church), he adopts a youthful approach to Charismatic urban church ministry. Presiding over a ministry that attracts a large number of the highly educated youth and urban elite, Apostle Webber's preaching resonates well with the religious sensibilities of the youth. From his reading of the gospels, Apostle Webber notes that Jesus had to confront human suffering that was sometimes caused by demonic forces and evil spirits. He believes that Bible passages such as Matthew 4:24; 8:16; Mark 1:32 and Luke 13:16 speak to this context. What he makes of passages such as these is that, they speak both of the demonic presence of sicknesses and need for divine power that expels demons and evil spirits. If demons can cause human suffering, then the superior person and power of the name of Jesus must be used to deliver and heal people. For Africa Pentecostals, notes Cephas Omenyo, 37 a more realistic way of helping Christians deal with deep seated spiritual fears is to rank Jesus Christ as higher in status and power, and able to heal and save.

Fourth, by way of last resort, healing evangelists cite divine providence as a cause for disease among God's covenant people. This viewpoint represents a somewhat different approach to the CM's healing ministry. This position is best represented by Apostle Mrs Dora Dumbuya, Sierra Leone's most noted Charismatic female church leader and founder of Jesus Is Lord Ministries International. Apostle Dumbuya who runs a weekly faith clinic where barren women, pregnant women and lactating mothers converge to receive their share of healing miracles, has

been awarded prestigious national laurels for her astute contribution to the development of Christianity and human fraternity (Blyden 2006:1). In her teaching, Apostle Dumbuya believes that biblical stories like the man born blind (John 9:3), Lazarus (John 11:4) and Paul (2 Corinthians 12:8-9), point to God permitting certain painful and unfortunate events or even death to occur so that the full benefits of his glory may be made manifest among his people. Ebola may perhaps be one of those tormenting ailments that God is using to declare his glory in the land. Bernard Reitsma\textsuperscript{38} refers to this approach as 'last option,' and suggests that Pentecostals (and I argue Charismatic healing evangelists also) only turn to it when all other options fail.

Although the perspectives represent what might be construed as moderate positions on Ebola found within the CM, the four reasons are consistent with the marks of Sierra Leone’s Charismatic revivals. Charismatics are widely recognized for their unflinching emphasis of healing, miracles, demons and exorcism, prophecy and anointing with olive oil. By reading Scripture this way, healing evangelists desire to retrace the roots of biblical Christianity, and to apply biblical principles to the existing cultural and social problems of its members. The fact that healing evangelists appear to have taken time to study Scripture and identify key factors they believe are responsible for human suffering, one may see this as an indication of their attempt at contextualization. These efforts show their concern for Holy Scripture and how the Bible speaks to the specific contexts of followers among whom they minister.

Healing evangelists and the Ebola crisis: interpretations, contexts and consequences

It is to be noted that the nuanced interpretations of the healing evangelists presented above about Ebola stem from their reading of Scripture and the local cultural contexts. This interpretation appears to have reinforced existing fears that were already circulating among a fearful public. In particular, faith leaders were quick to emphasize that Ebola was punishment for the evils of national political leaders and the excessive wrong carried out in the land.\textsuperscript{39} To compound an already worrying situation, some even went further to declare that angry ancestral spirits whose wishes and desires were abandoned, and the obnoxious activities of witchcraft, demonic forces and evil spirits were responsible for the


\textsuperscript{39} A. Featherstone, \textit{Keeping the Faith}, 23.
Ebola outbreak. Of course, because such interpretations clearly converged with traditional perceptions of strange diseases, they were easily accepted by the public.

Two implications in the fight against Ebola clearly emerge from their interpretations. Firstly, it was understood as lending support to the general sense of apathy and suspicion that there was a government attempt to cover up the crisis. Featherstone\textsuperscript{40} notes that some faith leaders denied the medical basis of Ebola. Many others even believed that medical and health personnel were actually spreading the very Ebola they claim to be fighting. Furthermore, there was an increase in cases of stigmatization. This was partly due to the perception that had developed where Ebola sufferers were themselves perceived as being punished for their involvement in witchcraft. Thus, people began to hide their sick, resisting all attempts to have them taken to isolation centres. Some even believed that because body parts were forcibly removed from Ebola patients, this explains why there was an increase in deaths. The effect was that communities decided to hide their sick and continue traditional burial practices so that their deceased relatives would be given appropriate traditional burial rites. The practice of hiding the sick and conducting secret burials led to increases in new infections and deaths, including medical practitioners, traditional healers, pastors, healing evangelists and other law enforcement agency officials.\textsuperscript{41}

A second impact was the effect it had on the ministry activities of healing evangelists. We noticed that the healing ritual of laying on of hands was immediately suspended and the government ordered all faith healing centres closed. Anointing with consecrated items such as holy oil, holy water and anointed handkerchiefs were replaced with cell phone ministries. Healing evangelists resorted to praying for sick people over the phone. Sick people were told to personally use consecrated items on themselves after the cell phone prayers. Charismatic camp meetings, conferences, revivals and all-night prayer meetings, that are a vital means of corporate worship, were banned. This was because the virus is known to spread easily among people who have close contact with each other. The roles of church ushers was expanded to include regular temperature checks with infrared thermometers. Even offerings were to be fumigated and ushers ordered to wear hand gloves before counting money. The traditional handshake that members shared at the end of the worship service was banned. Sitting too was much more spaced out to prevent body contact with people. The use of microphones during worship service was severely restricted. In some churches, those who were scheduled to take part in the worship service

\textsuperscript{40} A. Featherstone, \textit{Keeping the Faith}, 22.

\textsuperscript{41} A. Featherstone, \textit{Keeping the Faith}, 22.
were asked to bring personal microphones to prevent the spread of Ebola in the congregation. With Ebola in town, the very nature of corporate worship was never the same again.

A major consequence of this theological reflection was the changing role of faith leaders throughout the Ebola crisis. In the months immediately after the outbreak, some faith leaders played key roles in perpetuating misinformation about the virus and promoting stigma. However, as knowledge about containing Ebola expanded, government authorities, national and international health experts decided that it would be a prudent idea to include as many people as possible in the fight against the disease. It dawned upon all the parties concerned that there was more collaboration that had to be done if the eradication of Ebola was to be achieved. Faith leaders, traditional healers, healing evangelists have to be mobilized, trained and re-deployed to their home communities to help fight the virus. As this was done, the disease began to show signs of slowing down.

Evaluating the Charismatic response to the Ebola crisis
While the involvement of healing evangelists in the fight against Ebola certainly invites reflection, the scourge brings to the fore certain issues that have clear ramifications for understanding the role of faith leaders in times of national disasters. Three of these issues are worthy of further consideration.

First, as Ebola spread among the population, people succumbed to fear, and their faith faltered. The arrival of Ebola and the conflicting messages about its causes, lack of cure and prevention sent shock waves across the spine of the nation. The heaviness and uncertainty that fear creates and the fact that Sierra Leoneans were initially left to deal with the tragedy all alone, increased the nation’s sense of powerlessness in the face of a ferocious enemy. So, as Ebola raged on like wild fire in the savannah fields, the faith of many began to dissipate. Sierra Leoneans need no reminder that when they begin to see foreign expatriates withdrawing (yes, even missionaries!), major airlines cancelling flights into and out of the country, and land borders with neighbouring countries being closed, they know that things are going to get bad. I mean really, really bad. History reminds us that this was exactly what happened in the 1990s when a barbaric and horrendous rebel war tore apart the country leaving innocent civilians scraping for a living as

43 A. Featherstone, Keeping the Faith, 22.
refugees in neighbouring countries. Sadly, with Ebola many felt that this was happening all over again. Unfortunately, this time the enemy is not one who can be summoned to the table for peace talks. What we have here is an enemy who is mercilessly lethal and deadly. Sierra Leoneans, both within and outside the church, succumbed to enormous levels of fear and their faith faltered in the face of the lethal and cold hands of Ebola. While it is reasonable that fear gripped the nation, however, the traditional interpretation seems to have exacerbated fear in the people. By construing the present crisis as emerging from a harbinger of demons and evil spirits, healing evangelists inadvertently compounded the fear of the populace against an unknown enemy and depleted whatever was left of their faith.

Second, where fear and faltering faith reigns, false prophecy is bound to also reign. Fear is the bedrock that breeds false prophecy. Fear about the obnoxious activities of mystical and supernatural powers is prevalent in the belief system of Sierra Leone. When natural events happen that beats imagination and defies any explanation, people are quick to consult seers, mediums and diviners whom they hope will give a spiritual or divine interpretation about what is amiss and prescribe remedial measures. Sadly, many Christians are inclined to listen to such voices from within the church that are claiming that Ebola is some sort of punishment from God for un-confessed sin and terrible wrong doing in the land. According to these teachers, this punishment includes ailments such as strange fevers (Leviticus 26:16; Deuteronomy 28:22). The only cure involves pouring salt in boiling water and bathing with it (2 Kings 2:19-22). Some of the salt should also be sprinkled in and around dwelling homes to fend off this curse. Further, humanitarian aid in the form of anointed elements, such as olive oil, holy water, miracle handkerchiefs were also shipped to help the government fight-off Ebola. This misinformation was so prevalent that Christian and Muslim faith leaders formed actions groups against Ebola, such the Christian Action Group (CHRISTAG) and Islam Action Group (ISLAG). Rev Daniel G. Sesay, vice moderator of CHRISTAG and senior superintendent minister at the National Pentecostal Mission had to participate with members of ISLAG in radio and television discussion programs to educate the public about the medical causes of Ebola. I must note that what false prophecy did was to deny the scientific facts about the origin and spread of Ebola. Ebola is a virus whose fatality rate is estimated at 90%. Because this vital piece of information was the missing link in the Charismatic equation of the crisis, false prophecy spread among the people.

And third, in situations of crisis such as the one visited upon Sierra Leone by Ebola, Bible interpretation suffers terribly in much the same way as the people who live in that context. The view on Scripture taken by people experiencing
suffering often reflects a search for meaning that brings back order to the chaos of life. They are tempted to read Bible passages that speak of comfort, hope, assurance, healing or even the total defeat of supernatural and spiritual forces who are responsible for human suffering. Sometimes, although many of the Scripture passages have a context that is substantially different from their experiences, they are nonetheless applied to such contexts. It is no wonder then that the Ebola conundrum led to a plethora of hermeneutical applications that claimed that the outbreak was a result of sin in the church and nation (Leviticus 23:16). Other interpreters blamed the scourge on the activities of demonic forces (Matthew 4:24; Matthew 8:16; Luke 8:2; Revelation 16:14), whose primary intention was to fulfil their yearly and insatiable want of human blood. And still others see Ebola as a visitation of judgement upon the activities of political leaders and that God is now using this situation to issue a wakeup call for the church (1 Corinthians 10:6). Because these interpretations were given by revered church leaders such as those discussed above, they were simply accepted without any attempt to subject them to critical biblical scrutiny.

Whereas such interpretations are an attempt to apply Scripture to the existential needs of believers, it is important to note that other factors were also involved in the continuing spread of Ebola. Sierra Leoneans need no reminder that many people are living under conditions of poor hygiene with inadequate or non-existent health facilities. Even when there is an outbreak of seasonal diseases such as cholera that could easily be controlled where basic hygiene facilities exist, such diseases end up claiming the lives of many people before they are eventually brought under control. Although Ebola has no vaccine or cure, if appropriate resources such as routine health care facilities are put in place, the spread of Ebola could have been contained much earlier.

The church must learn to lead in times of unprecedented crisis and change. This leadership should include supplying a hermeneutically sound exposition of Scripture in the face of popular but faulty hermeneutics. It requires the church to harness the knowledge of health practitioners in the fight against Ebola. It calls on the leadership of the churches to adopt multi track approaches as the nation struggles to contain the deadly outbreak. Bible interpretation, health education and community sensitization are to be used to build up the church and strengthen the faith of Christians. This, in my view, is an area where the efforts of healing evangelists failed in the fight against Ebola. While their interpretations of the crisis were culturally appropriate, the same could not be said of its biblical and medical approach. It is no secret that the problems bedevilling the health sector were broader than Ebola. Addressing the spread of Ebola will require more than altering deeply entrenched cultural beliefs. It requires the churches to
apply biblical perspectives in the context of medical science so that cultural misgivings are effectively dealt with.

**Conclusion**

God calls believers in all generations living under different circumstances to consider their ways and draw near to him. What transpired in West Africa may be seen in the broad contexts of Jesus’ end time narrative (Matthew 24:3-14). It seems clear that human suffering may happen so that subsequent generations can learn from the experiences and mistakes of previous generations (Psalm 102:18; Romans 4:23-24; 1 Corinthians 10:11). Ebola is an unfolding tragedy for Sierra Leone and West Africa. Many precious souls were lost to the disease. People are infected with or affected by Ebola. The nation’s fragile economy will take years to rebuild. Social interaction particularly, the treasured culture of handshake and hug have been forever altered. However, as Charismatic healing evangelists have affirmed, new life will emerge out of this abyss of death and hopelessness. The People’s faith in a God who does heal will grow stronger than ever before. And, through these painful experiences of people, God will be glorified. But the church is called to witness to human suffering in ways that are biblically conscientious as well as culturally appropriate. The Ebola crisis will soon end. The outstanding question that remains though is this, are the churches adequately prepared to deal with any such disasters should they occur in the future? One hopes that they are.
Chapter 3
Critical Contextualization

Introduction, scope and methodology
Two hundred years after Christianity arrived in Sierra Leone, the oldest Protestant missionary field in West Africa, the country is once again experiencing a revival of the faith.1 This time, however, indigenous agents rather than foreign missionaries, are responsible for the revival and growth of Christianity. This revival is predicated upon Charismatic Movements (CMs) whose church-planting efforts that started in the late 1980s are beginning to have an impact on specific issues in Sierra Leone’s cultures. However, because there is a wide variety of independent churches, ministries and networks that are often included in most scholarly definitions of African CMs, it will be proper to put forward a definition that elucidates the meaning of the term used here to guide the discussions taken in this article.

Any discussion about the rise of CMs in Sierra Leone, as it is the case elsewhere in Africa,2 requires that a definition and delimitation be put forward to clarify the meaning of the term as used in this article. In the scholarly literature, there are generally two broad categories that define the term. The first meaning of the CMs refer to the charismatic revival that occurred in historic main line churches and denominations in the 1960s,3 the most prominent of which was the Reverend Dennis J. Bennett’s admission at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California, that he had experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit.4 This prompted a flurry of confessions from those who had also received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but had chosen to remain as communicant members of those historic denominations.5 These historic churches that had been affected by this charismatic renewal are not discussed in this article. A second meaning refers to independent charismatic churches, ministries and networks that developed outside of classical Pentecostalism or historic missionary and mainline churches from the late 1970s to the present. This new development within the African

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1 Gilbert Olson, *Church Growth in Sierra Leone*; George Anthony and Leslie Shyllon, *Two Centuries of Christianity in Sierra Leone*.
4 Dennis Bennett, *Nine o’clock in the Morning*, 82 – 83.
church context has been variously described as Neo-Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Neo-Charismatic churches or simply CMs. Following the sense suggested by this second definition and given that these new churches, ministries and networks were described as CMs ever since they emerged in Sierra Leone in the 1980s, this article chooses to refer to these churches, ministries and networks as CM.

African CMs are known to emphasise divine healing, miracles, demons and exorcism, dreams and their interpretation, prophecy, prosperity, anointing with olive oil and differentiating between spirits. These churches are most active in urban centres where they have a large following amongst the educated African élite who feel that the movement’s spirituality makes sense, addresses unresolved questions and enhances the cultural worldview of this constituency. The burgeoning of CMs in urban centres allow the movement to use contemporary media technologies to spread its message of prosperity, healing and spiritual power to a much wider audience. These charismatic churches appear to be addressing themes that are concurrent with the African cultural sensibilities of its urban élite and youthful followers. Whilst the cultural themes are themselves not new, the responses offered by key leaders of the movement are certainly new. This does not surprise us because the growth of Christianity in the southern hemisphere implies that ‘… what is to be expected from the South is a theology that addresses the setting in which it is produced.’

Given that charismatics are the most enthusiastic Christians on the African continent, and bearing in mind that these ‘… rising churches usually preach a strong and even pristine Christian message’ researchers are beginning to take interest in the theological practices of the movement. Amongst other theological markers, African charismatics employ exuberant and highly engaging sessions of praise and worship, complete with live bands and loud music. During worship services, church members use the name of Jesus to bind and cast out demonic forces and evil spirits that might want to obstruct spiritual and material prosperity and deny members the healing they so desperately desire.

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7 Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*; Clifton Clarke, *Pentecostal Theology in Africa*.


Charismatics are described as Bible-believing and Holy Ghost-anointed churches ‘... who do not compromise on the divinity and sacredness of the Bible.’

Bible reading functions as a repository of narratives that impacts directly on the life of the individual believer. Church members are often anointed with consecrated olive oil which is said to enhance their ability to display exceptional spiritual power. This anointing capacitates them so that they are able to ward off attacks from the devil and his legion of demons. It is also said to give them victory in spiritual warfare. Followers of these new Christian movements believe that there are spiritual causes for every physical occurrence in life. This faith recognizes the abstruse presence of demonic forces whose intent is to hamper human flourishing. The popularity of Charismatic theological practices suggest that there were historically unresolved questions within the churches that are now been addressed by Charismatic churches.

As Christianity continues to grow in Africa, new missiological questions arise about how to apply the Christian faith to the existing cultural issues. These questions are meant to enable the African church to become faithful to biblical Christianity and relevant to the local cultural context in which the faith is expressed. In Sierra Leone, CMs are attempting to interpret afresh the relationship they believe should exist between the gospel and traditional cultures. However, this Charismatic attempt to relate Christianity to culture has not been subjected to scholarly research, although many Christians subscribe to the core doctrines of spiritual power, deliverance from demonic oppression and prosperity espoused by the movement.

As a consequence, the scope of this article is to examine the critical contextualisation adopted by CMs in Sierra Leone. I do so in three ways. Firstly, I examine Paul Hiebert’s model of critical contextualisation as a viable tool for understanding the process of contextualising the gospel. Secondly, I profile three crucial issues (initiation ceremonies, marriage practices and ancestral rituals) in Sierra Leone’s cultures that continue to impact church ministry. Thirdly, using Hiebert’s model of critical contextualisation, I discuss the reasons why charismatics believe that their attempts at contextualising the gospel are proving useful for the church and pastoral ministry context in Sierra Leone.

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14 Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 166.
16 Irene John, “Charismatics and Community,” 131.
17 Erwin van der Meer, “Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and Mission in Africa,” 158.
18 Irene John, “Charismatics and Community,” 134.
In terms of methodology, this article grew out of my 2013 doctoral dissertation, a study which was based on a missiological analysis of the CMs in Sierra Leone. In it I analyze Hiebert's model of critical contextualisation in dialogue with the contextualisation and church ministry contexts of CMs in Sierra Leone. As part of this endeavour, I undertook three field research trips to Sierra Leone where interviews with key leaders of the movement were conducted. This process gave me unhindered access to material and books published by the leading advocates of the movements which were used to evaluate the CMs’ contextualisation.20

Critical contextualisation

Contextualisation has been an ongoing theme in missiological discourse. When the term first emerged in the 1960s from its ancestry in the conciliar movement,21 it was suggested as better suited to correct the limitations created by the inability of western theology to understand the cultures and contexts of non-Western churches and thus leverage the drawback of earlier models such as inculturation, enculturation, translation and indigenization, amongst others.22

More than this was the admission that contextualisation took provenance over other models because of its inability to respond to the social and cultural changes that have occurred in the African or Latin American mission fields.23

Contextualisation refers to an ongoing process where the gospel is assimilated into the total life of the people in their cultural context so that the message makes sense to those who profess it.24 For this process of contextualisation to be effective, it has to ensure that it guards against leading the church away from biblical truth by facilitating the emergence of a form of Christianity that makes sense to people. However, in doing this, the danger of syncretism is likely to

occurs, especially if the extent to which the church can contextualise the gospel has not been clearly identified.  

Although contextualisation is an ongoing theme in missiology, little effort has been made to apply specific models of contextualisation to the church contexts of CMs in West Africa. Mindful of the risk of oversimplification, the specific experiences of Charismatics in Sierra Leone make this statement much more justifiable. Whilst CMs have moved from an initial peripheral position to become a major factor that determines the course of Christianity in Sierra Leone, as it is in much of sub-Saharan Africa, little research has been carried out that shed light on this charismatic resurgence of the Christian faith, or its efforts to contextualise the gospel.

In Sierra Leone, it is only Irene John who attempted to situate the role played by charismatics as they seek to foster community and cohesion within the group in a chapter on ‘Charismatics and Community’. Even Leslie Shyllon, Sierra Leone’s leading church historian, only mentions the movement in passing, adding that it is known to be embroiled in feuds that often lead to splinters and schisms, as well as being accused of involvement in proselytizing and sheep-stealing from mainline denominations. Although insightful, these studies are bereft of answers to questions of history and contextual theological practices of the movement. It is this absence of critical missiological research on the charismatic churches in Sierra Leone that inspired me to attempt to respond to the problem of the movement’s contextualisation.

It was Paul Hiebert who introduced the model of ‘critical contextualization’ to missiology. Paul Hiebert affirms that as the gospel advances to foreign geographic territories, new methods are bound to arise that help the church to effectively contextualize the gospel. In this model, Hiebert notes that the growth of the church in new cultural contexts always raises challenges for the gospel. This model, Hiebert submits, guards against the ethno-centricism and cultural foreignness that non-contextualisation creates and it prevents newly founded churches from relapsing into relativism and syncretism when extreme forms of contextualisation are uncritically adopted. As Hiebert reminds us, ‘... the gospel

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26 Martin Lindhardt, Pentecostalism in Africa, 1.
27 Irene John, “Charismatics and Community,” 134.
28 George Anthony and Leslie Shyllon, Two Centuries of Christianity in Sierra Leone, 234.
is not simply information to be communicated. It is a message to which people must respond.' 31 Those who come to faith in Christ are expected to live in the light of their newly found faith. This may require that converts sever old ties, adapt old ways to new contexts or make a permanent and complete break with past traditions altogether. The Christian missionary therefore has to exercise great caution whilst communicating this message and inviting people to faith in Jesus Christ.

By guarding against these two extremes (ethno-centricism and cultural foreignness) that often challenge contextualisation, Hiebert’s model offers four steps that the church can take to incarnate the gospel in its new cultural context. These are: exegesis of the culture; exegesis of the Scriptures and the hermeneutical bridge; critical response; and the development of new contextualized practices. 32 These steps require the total participation of African converts with the missionary, as new converts study their culture in light of Scripture to build up the faith in a manner that is grounded in and faithful to the Bible. 33

Cultural Practices in Sierra Leone

The Republic of Sierra Leone, situated in West Africa has a population of 7 million. Sierra Leoneans are a deeply religious people. 34 Although precise statistics about the religious percentage share are hard to come by, estimates say that between 40% to 60% of the population are Muslims and 30% to 40% follow various versions of African traditional beliefs. The remaining 15% to 20% identify themselves as Christians, with about 7% subscribing to newer Charismatic and Pentecostal beliefs. 35 The variability in the figures is an indication of the level of inter-religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence people enjoy in the country. 36 In spite of the lower percentage of Christians, the country’s historic role in the spread of Christianity is impeccable. As a former crown colony for British rule in West Africa, Sierra Leone’s Krio people played a pivotal role in the early diffusion of Christianity across West Africa. 37 Today,

34 A. Featherstone, A. Keeping the Faith, 1.
36 A. Featherstone, A. Keeping the Faith, 18.
37 Lamin Sanneh, West African Christianity, 73; Andrew Walls, The Missionary Movement in Christian History, 103 -104; Jehu J. Hanciles, Euthanasia of a Mission African Church
whilst Christianity is reinventing itself with the founding and development of independent churches, ministries and networks that clearly espouse pneumatic tendencies, culture continues to be a hindrance to the authentic experience of the Christian faith.

Sierra Leone's 14 ethnic groups practise cultures that have similar characteristics. These cultures define acceptable traditions and norms that its people are expected to follow. They lend credence to the identity of persons and demarcate their place in the wider community. Because these traditional practices preceded the advent of Christianity and Islam in Sierra Leone, when people convert to Christianity, their personal or communal experiences as Christians are normally assessed against their cultural backgrounds. It is, therefore, necessary that these cultures and traditions are subjected to careful analysis so that we can better understand the CMs' contextualisation. Three of the most pervasive cultural practices are discussed below.

Initiation ceremonies
Amongst the Temne ethnic group of northern Sierra Leone, the age of puberty signifies the occasion when initiation rites are performed. These rites which take place at a secret society bush, include the rite of male circumcision and female genital mutilation (FGM). Given the controversy over this cultural practice, I shall focus briefly on the female Bundo Secret Society where FGM is performed. At puberty, young girls are sent to the digba, a revered female traditional leader who also doubles as a traditional midwife, to go through genital cutting. Working with trusted female traditional elders, the digba receives the bora (financial token) from the parents of the young girls through the chiefdom elders. She prepares the girls for initiation rites, performs the cutting of the labia minora and supervises every stage of the initiation ceremony. The new initiates, who are kept in isolation throughout the process, are only presented back to the


40 Bianca Schimmel, Female Genital Mutilation in Sierra Leone (Eschborn: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, 2007).

community upon the successful completion of all initiation rites. When enacting her roles, the digba serves as the official representative of the community of elders, which comprise the living and ancestors. The entire initiation ceremony is intended to train young initiates to develop kinship ties with age mates, identify their place within the community and acquire skills that will help them to meaningfully participate in the cohesion of the community as responsible adults. It is the responsibility of the digba to imbibe in the young girls the skills necessary for service as elder sisters, wives, and mothers. Unless young girls complete initiation ceremonies of the Bundo secret society, they will not be married off or perceived as responsible adults.\textsuperscript{42} Non-initiates are often subjected to ridicule and ostracization by peers.

**Marriage patterns**

Sierra Leoneans share a deep sense of allegiance to their family. Family life includes more than father, mother and children. The belief amongst them is that human life should not be lived outside of the community. A life lived in seclusion is unthinkable. In any given single home, there would be at least three generations of people present – grandparents, parents, and children. The family unit can best be described as an extended family, rather than a nuclear family.\textsuperscript{43} In such circumstances, the practice of polygamy is a traditionally accepted norm that governs family and community life. Although this practice is much more prevalent amongst people living in the traditionally conservative rural regions of Sierra Leone, those who migrate to settle in urban centres still have the inclination to continue this tradition. The 2004 National Population Census indicates that 18.31% of the national population is living in polygamous households.\textsuperscript{44} Amongst the Temne, Mende and Limba people, polygamy accords men the right to marry many wives. There are no limits that are imposed on the number of wives the husband is allowed to have, as long as he is able to pay the dowry. There are a number of reasons that lead to polygamy. Prominent amongst the reasons why the practice of polygamy is allowed is procreation. Amongst the Temne, although families need to grow in number, childbearing is not allowed outside marriage. If after contracting a marriage, the wife fails to bear children, tradition allows the husband in consultation with his family along with the first wife, to look for a second wife. The second wife is usually expected to bear

\textsuperscript{42} James Edward Davies, *The Church and the Secret Society Syndrome in Sierra Leone* (Freetown: The Evangelical College of Theology, 2009).

\textsuperscript{43} A. Featherstone, *A. Keeping the Faith*, 1.

children for that family. The search for the co-wife is carried out from the same clan, village or region where the husband originated. All the traditional rights that go with marriages are performed fully for the second wife. Other reasons for the prevalence of polygamy may include agricultural productivity, the right to become a member of a traditional ruling family or even for purely personal reasons. New advocates for the continuation of traditional marriage practices emerge with an ever-increasing frequency.

Ancestral rituals
Ancestors play an important role in the traditional world view of Sierra Leone. The belief that ancestors continue to exist after death in the world of the 'living dead' remains an integral part of what sustains the well-being of the community. The ancestors are the rock from which the present generation is hewn. Therefore, they wield enormous influence on their surviving relatives, so much so that it is well nigh impossible to set them aside. To do this will be equivalent to depleting that community of its roots in the past, denying its culture and smearing its dignity. This view of the ancestors held by Sierra Leone’s traditionalists points to two rites that must be upheld if surviving relatives desire to continue enjoying the protection, provision and good will of the ancestors. Traditionally, death does not end human life. Death is transitory, possessing the power to usher persons from a state of physical existence to one that is spiritual. Although the dead are believed to be spatially living in the abode of their graves, they continue to exist as real spiritual beings in the world of the living dead. That is why people who hold to this traditional world view have a clear sense of a place where they believe the ancestors presently live. The Krio for instance, believe that at death the ancestors proceed from physical existence to live in the ‘world of truth.’ Herethey do not suffer from the corrupting effects of deception which blights human societies because they now know reality. The Mende believe that their dead are ‘living in God’s bosom.’ Both the Limba and Temne believe that the ancestors ‘live in the place of the dead.’ This abode does not suggest any inability to act, but from this place of the dead, the ancestors are better able to monitor, control and/or change the course of events amongst their

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46 Prince Conteh, Traditionalists, Muslims and Christians in Africa, 37.
47 Leopold A. Foullah, Administering the Local Church (Freetown: Mount Auroel Publishers, 2000), 73.
48 Harry Sawyerr, "Graveside Libations in and Near Freetown," 43.
49 Sahr Yambasu, Dialectics of Evangelization, 64.
50 Prince Conteh, Traditionalists, Muslims and Christians in Africa, 37.
living relatives. Thus, ancestors are always consulted when important life events are celebrated.

Charismatics, culture and critical contextualisation
Sierra Leoneans are fascinated with continuing certain cultural practices even after conversion.51 This grip that culture has on the world view of persons often challenges the church’s missionary approach and its understanding of the faith. Whilst the church has not projected a unanimous approach to the issue of culture, charismatics are gradually becoming noticeable for their response to specific issues in culture. Bishop Julius Laggah, prelate of Bethel World Outreach Ministries International founded in 1992, believes that every human culture has a repertoire of good aspects and values. He argues further, like many other leaders of the CMs, that the entry of sin into creation distorted those good values and opened them up to demonic influences. Demonic cultures prevent people from coming to faith in Christ. These corrupted human cultures, he argues, must be evangelized and resubmitted to Christ whose redeeming power brings about transformation. Using the passage from Revelation 7:9 where John saw the great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language, Laggah adds:

The gospel that we are called to preach should transcend cultural and ethnic barriers ... God is interested in the salvation of every culture whether it be African, European, American or Asian culture.52

As a consequence, Laggah calls on the churches to be extremely careful in the process of contextualisation to avoid the danger of bringing sinful aspects of traditional cultures, such as initiation ceremonies, polygamy and ancestral rituals, back into the church.

Charismatics and initiation ceremonies
Charismatics reject participation in all initiation ceremonies, such as the Bondo secret society where FGM is performed. In his rebuttal of initiation ceremonies, Bishop Jonathan Cole, who founded New Life Ministries International in 1993, reasons that the female Bondo secret society allows people to contract blood covenants with demonic forces. Cole53 sees the Bondo secret society as shrouded in mystery, and that the FGM procedure clearly contradicts the teaching of Holy Scripture. Whilst the Bondo secret society may have contributed to the moral

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51 James Davies, The Church and the Secret Society Syndrome in Sierra Leone, 1.
52 Julius Laggah, Missions Possible, 47.
development and preparation of young girls so that they are able to perform adult roles, charismatic church leaders such as Pastor Francis Mambu, who founded Faith Healing Bible Church in 1987, believe that the church has a better alternative for the training of the young. They do this during their annual conferences where special teaching sessions are held on marriage and family life.\textsuperscript{54} Charismatics, furthermore, have not hidden their antipathy against attempts made elsewhere in Africa to Christianise initiation ceremonies, the practice of FGM or the entire female Bondo secret society.\textsuperscript{55} The antidote to this charismatic aversion to female initiation ceremonies is an intensification of Christian discipleship and Bible training in their churches on topics such as marriage and family life and Christian parenting.

Charismatics and marriage practices
As noted already, the accepted traditional patterns of marriage and family life are polygamous and extended in nature. The reasons for this are not farfetched because in a society where life is lived in dialogue with others, people exist not as individuals but in collaboration with each other in the community. Nonetheless, in spite of this traditional view on marriage and family life, when the charismatic churches came into the limelight, leaders of the movement showed a very critical and vocal attitude against the practice of polygamy. New Life’s Bishop Jonathan Cole,\textsuperscript{56} using what he describes as the ‘law of first mention’ which he develops from the Genesis creation narrative, argues against polygamy as a complete breach of God’s desire for the institution of marriage. For him, monogamy is God’s divine will for the institution of marriage. For Pastor Francis Mambu’s Faith Healing Bible Church, marriage is a holy union between one man and one woman. Divorced persons are not allowed to re-marry, nor can believers marry unbelievers.\textsuperscript{57}

To build a cohesive community within their churches, charismatics have supported young couples by paying for some of their wedding costs. This emphasis has not only restored ethical civility amongst charismatic married couples, but has also provided paradigms of how to live in the midst of the difficult economic times in Sierra Leone. The impact of this charismatic preference for monogamous marriage and family life, and the support they give

\textsuperscript{54} Francis Mambu, \textit{The Fifth Minister’s Church Growth Strategy}, 52 – 58.
\textsuperscript{56} Jonathan A Cole, \textit{Devil, Demons and Deliverance}, 37.
\textsuperscript{57} Francis Mambu, \textit{The Fifth Minister’s Church Growth Strategy}, 52 – 58.
to families has brought a number of benefits to the young born-again urban élites, towards whom its ministries are targeted. Firstly, young couples are better able to exercise control over their finances. Secondly, it has also led to the restoration of the dignity of women in what used to be a traditional male-dominated society. And thirdly, as Irene John puts it, ‘... women are not abused by their men, and they do not compete with other women (particularly the in-laws) for the affection of their husbands.’

Charismatics and ancestral rituals
Whilst charismatics agree that the memory of the dead is to be cherished, and although the movement has ensured that welfare funds (such as the death benefit fund) are created to support families when death occurs, they have also been clear in expressing complete repugnance for specific ancestral rituals. From their reading of Holy Scripture, African charismatics like other Christians in Africa, argue that the believer is not allowed to offer animal sacrifices or bring libation to the ancestors (Dt 26:14). This is because by his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has offered the perfect sacrifice that has atoned for human sin (Heb 9:26). This recognition means that charismatics believe that there is no other person or spirit who qualifies as intermediary between God and his people, other than Jesus Christ. Furthermore, charismatics believe that the Bible strongly prohibits contacting the dead by invoking their spirits and seeking counsel from them (Dt 18:10–11). Although some hard line traditionalists have accused charismatics of fragmenting traditional values by this strict stance against rituals like ancestral sacrifices, the movement is neither perturbed nor deterred in its resolve to remain faithful to the Scriptures.

Hiebert's critical contextualisation
Having examined the charismatic responses to Sierra Leone’s ongoing cultural issues, is there a basis on which these charismatic contextualized practices can be applied to the model proposed by Hiebert’s? Four perspectives will help shed light on the link between them.

Firstly, Hiebert contends that this model seriously regards the efficacy of the gospel and the essential nature of human cultures in understanding the gospel. To allow this to happen in a specific mission context, an exegesis of both culture

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58 Irene John, “Charismatics and Community,” 135.
60 Irene John, “Charismatics and Community,” 136.
and the Scriptures is required. African charismatics like other Christian groups, take Holy Scripture seriously and wants to communicate in ways that are just and fair to the recipient culture. Therefore, their reading of the Bible leads them to reject FGM, polygamous marriage practices and ancestral rituals. This is a bold step and demonstrates seriousness, the kind of which is poised to build a healthy church. The movement wants to send a clear message that they are on a mission that is re-shaping the Christian faith in Sierra Leone.

Secondly, Hiebert’s model does not pre-judge which aspects of human cultures are considered useful. Rather, applying the model requires the missionary to work with people so that they are able to study their own culture carefully and come up with what is relevant to their context. The purpose of the study of culture is to understand the old ways, not to judge them. Through the marriage and family life seminars, charismatic appear to have led the way in identifying certain aspects of culture that limit the authentic expression of the gospel in ways that are relevant to their context. Consequently, these aspects have been critically disposed of by the CMs.

Thirdly, critical contextualisation uses tools from the Bible and human culture to construct a theology that is both relevant to the church and makes sense to people. By using Scripture to evaluate elements within their cultures, the church grows in its ability to discern truth. As a people who love the Bible, the charismatic uses of the Scriptures helps them to better understand their cultures and discern how the truth of the gospel applies to this reality. For instance, Bishop Cole’s ‘law of first mention’ is presently shaping the movement’s approach to marriage and family practices.

Fourthly, this model allows the church to claim ownership of its ministry praxis rather than to depend on external imposition, no matter how well-meaning such imposition may have been. In view of the fact that it is the church that developed these new contextualized practices, those practices will be Christian because they explicitly seek to express biblical teaching. They will also be contextual, because they were created by the church using forms that are understandable to people in their given context. Consequently, charismatic theological practices are becoming the sine qua non for the urban elite members of the movement.

62 Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity, 166; Martin Lindhardt, Pentecostalism in Africa, 64 – 65.
64 Paul Hiebert, “Critical Contextualization,” 110.
Conclusion
This article presented the contextual theological approaches of charismatics to specific issues in the cultures of Sierra Leone. The rise of charismatic churches brought a new indigenous Christian approach that attempts to interpret afresh the relationship that should exist between the gospel and human cultures. This process of contextualisation involves applying the gospel to a specific cultural context so that biblical Christianity can make sense to people. However, in striving to contextualize, the church must guard against the kind of theologizing that merely reinforces the cultural practices of people. When the church uses African culture in this way without recourse to a serious study of Holy Scripture, contextualisation will certainly spell syncretistic doom for the church. The church is called to use Holy Scriptures in its evaluation of the themes that are entrenched in African culture. This critical model of contextualisation, if used properly, may potentially build authentic forms of Christianity that are faithful to the Scriptures and are effectively disposed to address the cultural context of Sierra Leone. However, this process has not always been easy for the African church. Critical contextualisation calls into question the extent to which the church is allowed to go in its process of contextualizing the gospel without losing the essential components that are contained therein. By its objection and critical attitude towards traditional initiation ceremonies, polygamous marriage practices and ancestral rituals, CMs may be helping the churches to be more effective in their ministries. These attempts should be regarded as mediating a revival where churches and other Christian groups can make a spiritual and moral impact on those communities where they minister across Sierra Leone.
Chapter 4
Theological Education

Introduction
It is now common knowledge that the most buoyant hotspots of Christianity are firmly anchored in the non-western world,¹ where the faith is blossoming among the young, highly educated, and urban élite members of the population. Recent studies indicate that the Charismatic Movement that began in the late 1970s and early 1980s is gradually becoming the most inviting face of the Christian faith in Africa.² Sierra Leone has seen a reinvention of Christianity with the founding and development of independent churches, ministries and networks that clearly espouse Charismatic spirituality. However, the pace of growth seen in the Christian faith far outweighs the available theological training institutions that prepare the leaders who will eventually preside over the affairs of these churches. This scenario suggests that there exists a kind of theological anaemia that does not augur well for theological education in Sierra Leone. Thus, a tracking of the maze in which theological education has evolved is a necessary step in attempting to cure this disquieting anaemia.

Byang Kato, alarmed at the impending and pervasive danger that would befall a church that tries to exist without theology, predicted in the mid-1970s that if theological education is not put at the centre of the growing pace of Christianity in Africa, a kind of “Christo-paganism” was bound to develop. And that when it did, there would be an increased ignorance of the most basic Bible doctrines that churches are expected to possess. Kato believed this reality would be far more destructive to the health of the African church as it would accentuate a return to

paganism. More recently, James Nkansah-Obrempong, having presented what he sees as the contemporary theological situation in Africa, notes that one of the main difficulties besetting African Evangelical theologians is their failure to use appropriately African categories in their theological reflection. These voices issue a stern warning that should guide the development of theological education that is beneficial to the church in Africa.

The situation described above not only reflects the Africa of Kato’s day, but also, unfortunately, reflects the perception that many hold about the current state of theological education in Sierra Leone. It is known in the academy in Sierra Leone that Harry Sawyerr and Edward Fashole-Luke, both of whom taught theology at Fourah Bay College from the 1960s to the 1980s, agree with Kato’s reckoning that theological reflection should emerge from and be solidly based on a carefully developed exegesis of the Bible. This premise lays an appropriate background upon which theological education must seek to interface with the crucial issues that underpin Sierra Leone’s African cultures. However, the integration of such themes from Sierra Leone’s African cultures must be seen only as an entry point for theological education that is poised to benefit the church.

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4 James Nkansah-Obrempong, 'The Contemporary Theological Situation in Africa: An Overview,' Evangelical Review of Theology 31:2 (2007), 148. There is often considerable acrimony about the precise meaning of the term Evangelical or Evangelicalism. Because of this, it is proper that I propose a working definition that governs my use of this term in this article. This paper follows the meaning of the term Evangelical as understood in Sierra Leone, where it would refer to those churches that were founded by Protestant missionary denominations. These churches hold to beliefs such as: (a) the entire trustworthiness of Holy Scripture; (b) the centrality and finality of Christ in salvation; (c) the total sinfulness of humanity and their need for salvation through Christ’s atoning death as well as the need for holy living through the power of the Holy Spirit; and (d) evangelism. This understanding may exclude a number of churches in Sierra Leone from what counts as being Evangelical. Cf. Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier eds., The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1-14; Iain Taylor ed., Not Evangelical Enough! The Gospel at the Centre (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), 2-3; Tom Greggs ed., New Perspectives for Evangelical Theology: Engaging with God, Scripture and the World (London/New York: Routledge, 2010), 5-6; Mark A. Knoll, The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitfield and The Wesleys (Leicester: IVP, 2004), 11-18.
The Historical Context of Theological Education

The Missionary Era
In the history of missions, theological education is often perceived as a useful tool that helps the church grow in the new territories where missionaries have carried the gospel. This is exactly what transpired in Sierra Leone during the colonial and missionary era. Sierra Leone’s contact with Christianity and the role this former British colony played in the early diffusion of Christianity across West Africa are well documented.\(^6\) Considered the first Protestant mission field in tropical Africa,\(^7\) the Province of Freedom became a bastion for the resettlement of freed slaves when it was founded in 1791.\(^8\) Freetown became a major hub for missionary, educational and economic activity across British controlled West Africa. Members of the Clapham Sect\(^9\) who established the Sierra Leone Company, envisaged the Province of Freedom to be a Christian experiment where freed slaves would be encouraged to productively use the land and eventually seek self-determination.\(^10\) It was to Freetown that the black poor, Nova Scotians, Maroons and Re-captives were resettled, trained and eventually dispersed to work in other parts of West Africa.\(^11\) The Re-captives, who later became the Krio people of Sierra Leone, went on to become the single most

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\(^7\) Olson, *Church Growth in Sierra Leone*, 15.

\(^8\) Sanneh, *Abolitionist Abroad*, 41.


important factor to profoundly impact early African Christianity and missions in West Africa.

The Church Missionary Society (CMS),\textsuperscript{12} which was at the forefront of the missionary expedition in Sierra Leone, founded Fourah Bay College\textsuperscript{13} in 1827 as an institute for the training of pastors, catechists, missionaries and schoolmasters. The establishment of this institution offered the Re-captives the opportunity to excel in education, thus leading to their integration in the British colonial administration as civil servants. The most well-known example of the Re-captives’ excellence in education and Christianity was Samuel Adjai Crowther who led a pioneering missionary enterprise in Nigeria where he served as the first black bishop in the CMS Niger mission.\textsuperscript{14} Through the training provided at Fourah Bay College, the Re-captives returned to their home countries with a “new burden of Christian responsibility to the rest of the continent.”\textsuperscript{15}

This pattern of missionary theological education continued with the coming of other missionary agencies such as the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion (1800), the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society from London (1811), the US based United Brethren in Christ (1855), the Roman Catholic Church (1859), the American Wesleyan Mission (1889), the Seventh Day Adventist Missionary

\textsuperscript{12} The Church Missionary Society (CMS) was founded on Friday 12 April 1799 as the Society for Missions to Africa and the East by sixteen Evangelical clergymen and nine laymen in the upper room of the Castle and Falcon Inn, Aldergste Street in London. The express purpose of the CMS was “that it is a duty highly incumbent upon every Christian to endeavour to propagate the knowledge of the Gospel among the Heathen.” In 1813, it adopted the name CMS. See, Stock, \textit{The History of the Church Missionary Society}, 69; Hanciles, \textit{Euthanasia of a Mission}, 13; Latourette, \textit{A History of Christianity}, 1033. For a comprehensive history of the CMS see, Jocelyn Murray, \textit{Proclaim the Good News: A Short History of the Church Missionary Society} (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985); Kevin Ward, ‘Taking Stock: The Church Missionary Society and Its Historians,’ in Kevin Ward and Brain Stanley eds., \textit{The Church Missionary Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999} (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2000).


\textsuperscript{15} Sanneh, \textit{West African Christianity}, 73.
Society (1907) and the Assemblies of God Mission (1950), among others. Member churches behind some of these missionary agencies cooperated with each other in carrying out their task of evangelism and later founded the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (CCSL) in 1924 and the Evangelical Fellowship of Sierra Leone (EFSL) in 1959. The CCSL promoted the ecumenical activities of the World Council of Churches, while the EFSL chose to associate itself with churches who see themselves as Evangelicals in Sierra Leone. The EFSL went on to become the first national Evangelical fellowship in Africa to obtain membership from the World Evangelical Alliance.

One key consequence of this early missionary collaboration was the founding of The Evangelical College of Theology in 1964 as the primary institution to deliver theological education that strengthens Evangelical churches in Sierra Leone. The missions supplied the teaching faculty, while students were drawn from mainline Evangelical churches who were members of EFSL. The belief shared by these agencies was and still is that the church can be properly incarnated through the training of the national believers in a basic understanding of the Bible, biblical languages, theology and the arts. The missionary agents constituted the bulk of the teaching force at Fourah Bay College and The Evangelical College of Theology and they controlled the type of theological education provided. This education was tilted toward an understanding of the biblical text that uses the western categories in which Christian theology was formulated. Few attempts were taken to try to understand the traditional and religious African contexts in which the training was done.

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18 The Evangelical College of Theology (TECT) was founded in 1964 by three Evangelical missionary denominations, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, the Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone and the Missionary Church of Africa. The Baptist Convention of Sierra Leone and Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion joined the founding denominations to become proprietors in 1979 and 1998 respectively. This college, whose original name was Sierra Leone Bible College, was re-named The Evangelical College of Theology in 2000 to allow it to reflect the diversified educational programmes that are offered at the college. The college offers diploma and bachelor’s degree programmes in theology, community development studies, peace and conflict studies and secretarial studies. The college is accredited by Fourah Bay College, the Tertiary Education Commission in Sierra Leone, and the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa.
The Era of National Independence

After Sierra Leone attained political independence from Britain in 1961, discussions in the political arena soon began to infiltrate the church scene. This pattern was similar to what was happening in much of Africa where the wave of political independence coalesced into a clamour for church autonomy. Churches began to discuss whether or not the inherited theological education that shaped ecclesiastical life under the colonial period was relevant for independent Africa.19

When the churches became nationalised, efforts were made to introduce courses that, it was thought, were better able to address important cultural issues with which African Christians were struggling. Theological training institutes became more open to the idea of teaching African Traditional Religion, African Theology, and Contextualization that were once seen as too liberal to be included in a curriculum for theological education. The idea was that, in order for theological reflection to be more useful in addressing the cultural context in which it was practised, the church should pay attention to the cultural situation of its African adherents.20 This, they believed, was a missing element that had weakened theological education under the missionary era. The few national professors who taught theology at Fourah Bay College became more engaged in conducting research on critical cultural issues that they saw as having significant impact on ecclesiastical life for Sierra Leone’s Christians.21 Students of theology were also encouraged to undertake theological research in issues that interfaced Christian theology with the cultural and traditional background of Sierra Leone.

It appears as if, under the era of national independence, it dawned upon the practitioners of theological education that the African traditional and religious worldview upon which Christianity was received had been ignored for too long. They decided therefore, that this background needed to be revisited for careful analysis if the continued relevance of the faith was to be assured.22 However, this process moved theological education away from the biblical text and many of its western theological accretions. Thus, theological education became much more concerned with mediating religious, traditional and cultural relevance in the African context, and less about understanding the biblical text.

The Conflict and Post-conflict Era

Independent Sierra Leone soon realized that the political élite must do more if the entire population were to share in the gains of independence. However, after removing colonial oppression, Sierra Leone followed the path taken by other newly independent African states where interparty and intraparty conflicts over access to power dominated the political atmosphere. The decision to introduce a one-party system of governance, the atmosphere of corruption that allowed government functionaries and politicians to freely embezzle state funds without any accountability, the discovery of diamonds, and meddling by powerful external agents led to the outbreak of a horrendous rebel war in 1991. By the time the war ended in 2002, tens of thousands of people were killed and many more had their limbs gruesomely amputated. Women and girls were subjected to gang rape by the rebel forces. Property damage was extensive and many people became either internally displaced persons or refugees outside Sierra Leone. A Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court for Sierra Leone were set up to investigate what went wrong, seek reconciliation, and try those who bore the greatest responsibility for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and human rights violations committed during the rebel conflict.

The impact of the war on the churches meant that they had to adopt measures that would restore civility in the political arena and address the social issues that prompted the war in the first place. Churches distributed relief supplies such as food and non-food items, and organized trauma healing and counselling sessions for war victims. Churches became temporary living centres for refugees and internally displaced persons. Given the nature of crimes committed and the trauma suffered by people, many Christians interpreted the war as having been caused by demonic forces whose aim was to destroy Sierra Leone. To ameliorate this terrible situation, national sessions of prayer for repentance were organized by the churches throughout Sierra Leone.

Theological education needed to respond to this new social order in Sierra Leone. The existing curricula of theological institutions were extensively revised to allow the introduction of new non-theological degree programmes. The new programmes were envisaged to address community development, poverty, women and gender issues, conflict, peace and human rights, among others. For instance, The Evangelical College of Theology introduced two new degree programmes, Bachelor of Arts in Community Development Studies and Bachelor of Arts in Peace & Conflict Studies. After their introduction these academic programmes quickly received accreditation from Fourah Bay College. Using a distinctly Christian-based curriculum, the degree programmes offer courses that address social issues and provide a Christian solution to the social disintegration created by the war. This conflict and post-conflict era required theological education to emphasize the relevance of Christian theology for good governance, peace building, human rights, reconciliation, community development and social justice.

The Nature of Theological Education

The University Model of Theological Education

Sierra Leone has a long history of involvement in the delivery of theological education in the West African sub-region. The pastoral training offered to freed black slaves in Freetown contributed to the early spread of Christianity across West Africa. Today Fourah Bay College (FBC), The Evangelical College of Theology (TECT) and Sierra Leone Theological College (SLTC) offer programmes of study under the university model of theological education. These colleges provide theological and non-theological education mainly at the baccalaureate level. FBC, which is part of the University of Sierra Leone and the Tertiary Education Commission, provides accreditation to TECT and SLTC. Graduates from TECT and SLTC often proceed to FBC for further studies at the graduate and postgraduate levels in theology and related fields.

27 The Sierra Leone Theological College (SLTC) was founded in 1975 by three church denominations that had membership with the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone. These denominations are: the Anglican Diocese of Freetown and Bo, the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone and the United Methodist Church Sierra Leone Conference. The college offers diploma and bachelor's degree programmes in theology, community development studies, peace and conflict studies and secretarial studies. The college is accredited by Fourah Bay College and the Tertiary Education Commission in Sierra Leone.
There are many benefits that can be identified in the university model of theological education. First, the colleges in this model try to maintain very high academic standards in the process of admitting, training and graduating students. Second, these colleges have national and international accreditation that renders their programmes of study competitive. Third, graduates from these colleges have access to and gain easy admission at institutions of further and higher education in Sierra Leone and overseas. And finally, graduates from colleges that follow the university model of theological education enter diversified professional careers upon the completion of their studies. This makes these colleges the port of first call for those seeking advanced level theological education.

Although advantages such as these exist, Evangelical voices have begun to see areas that tend to weaken the efficacy of the theological education offered by these colleges. First, colleges associated with the university model of theological education have a tendency to pay less emphasis on the practical relevance of their training to the needs of church life and pastoral ministry. Second, they are seen as promoting a pluralistic understanding of theology and religious studies that call into question the need for evangelism. Third, given that graduates have received training that makes them highly qualified professionals, it is often difficult to retain them for service in pastoral ministry. Fourth, given the mass migration of graduates into professions other than pastoral ministry, the church is deprived of its most highly trained theologians.

The Denominational Model of Theological Education

As church denominations became more organized in their governance structures and ecclesiastical networks, the idea to form centres for theological training that are owned and managed by individual denominations was conceived as a viable alternative to the perceived problems in the existing theological colleges following the university model. Two of the most prominent Evangelical denominations that had collaborated to found colleges that follow the university model bought into this idea. The Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone established the Wesleyan Christian College at Gbendembu, in northern Sierra Leone, with the aim of training men and women as champions of Christ who would serve in pastoral ministry in Sierra Leone and beyond. The Baptist Convention of Sierra Leone also established the Baptist Bible Institute at Lunsar, in northern Sierra Leone to train its pastors and evangelists. Between them, they offer two theological programmes, Certificate in Theology and Diploma in Theology. Persons who desire to serve in the pastoral ministry in these denominations
must first go through the training offered by these denominational training schools before they are accepted as pastors.

The denominations that have established centres where internal pastoral theological training is carried out argue that these institutes promise certain benefits. They see these training centres as less expensive to operate as they simply use the existing infrastructure that the churches already have for its theological training programmes. Further, they believe that these training centres accord students unhindered opportunity to study in-depth their denominational doctrines so that their pastors are thoroughly equipped in understanding the beliefs that underpin their faith convictions. Finally, these denominations believe they can more often retain graduates in the pastoral ministry.

Nevertheless, the denominational model of theological education is not without its limitations. For instance, given that these institutes are cheaper to run, the model is criticised for providing students with limited access to teaching and learning materials. There are also inadequate facilities for the delivery of proper theological training programmes. Moreover, because these institutes cater only for students from its own denominations, their programmes appear to pay less attention to the academic study of theology or dialogue with other theological persuasions that could enrich their graduates’ pastoral ministry.

The Charismatic Model of Theological Education

New developments that took place in 1990s transformed the approach of churches to Bible training. These developments prompted a turning point that affected the delivery of theological education in Sierra Leone. The founding of Freetown Bible Training Centre (FBTC) by American Charismatic evangelist and Bible teacher, Russ Tatro, who had relocated to Sierra Leone from neighbouring Liberia, was pivotal in the shift taking place in theological education. Tatro’s zeal for evangelism prompted the founding of a non-residential Bible school where students were offered rapid discipleship training and deployed to plant “Charismatic Bible-believing churches.” The spread of this Charismatic model of theological education hinged on the suspicion in Charismatic circles that academic level theological education was unsuited to sustaining the revival that was sweeping across the church scene.28 In this model, practitioners argue that

28 Allan Anderson and Matthews Ojo have both noted this paradigm of scepticism over the usefulness of academic level theological education among Pentecostal and Charismatic groups in Africa. See Allan Anderson, An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity, (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 245; Matthews Ojo, The End-
what is needed for participation in programmes of Bible training is conversion, a sense of call into pastoral ministry, and evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit. FBTC’s curriculum starts with a two-year non-residential diploma in ministerial training that meets on Saturdays. This is followed by a one-year of advanced study and leads to an advanced diploma in ministerial training for those who have the backing of their churches to enter the pastoral ministry. The informal nature of training delivered over the years, coupled with the colourful graduation ceremonies organized by FBTC, has seen an increase in the popularity of this sort of Bible training among churches.

The Charismatic model is proud of the following advantages: firstly, this model does not require the completion of secondary school as a necessary condition for admission into its Bible training programmes. As noted already, the emphasis is on the conversion experience, a sense of call, and evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the applicant. Second, the training programme itself is less formal because it is modelled along the lines of discipleship. Classes are often interspersed with sessions of praise and worship, seminars and Bible teaching. Final examinations use a true and false mode of assessment and can be taken in written or oral format. Third, the whole training program is oriented toward Charismatic church and pastoral practice that draws freely from the African concepts of spiritual power, healing, demons and witchcraft. This makes for easy convergence with the spiritual impulses that Sierra Leone’s Christians possess.

However, it is at this critical juncture that the Charismatic model of theological training is most criticized by other churches. First, this model is criticised for being the main conduit that encouraged the spread of prosperity theologies across the church scene in Sierra Leone. Second, many see this form of training as anti-academic due to its primary emphasis on the anointing of the Holy Spirit in training for ministry. And finally, graduates from schools in the Charismatic model are often not given any academic recognition for the training they received. This means that when they seek admission at higher institutions for

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31 See Shyllon, *Two Centuries of Christianity* ..., 351.
further studies, they are denied entrance. This happens both at denominational schools and at colleges using the university model.

The Concerns of Theological Education

The Emergence of Charismatic Christianity
The desire to see revival break out in the church scene ignited evanglistic initiatives among Evangelical churches in the 1970s and 80s. Member churches affiliated with EFSI supported the evangelistic work of New Life for All campaign, the Scripture Union of Sierra Leone, and the Sierra Leone Fellowship of Evangelical Students in primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions in Sierra Leone. When these youth completed university, they found that their churches were slow in incorporating their newly acquired zeal for evangelistic revival that these organizations had hoped to achieve. This led some of them to establish small groups that met initially for Bible study and prayer. The small groups eventually became Charismatic churches when they began to meet on Sundays. These new Charismatic churches later received a significant boost with the coming of FBTC in the 1990s.

The Charismatic form of expressing the Christian faith is very spontaneous and lively. This expression represents a conglomeration of various theological and pastoral practices that arouse the interests of worshipers. Such practices include, but are not limited to praise and worship, lively music teams patterned after contemporary western music bands, fasting and all-night sessions of warfare prayers, prosperity summits, exorcism, prophecy, and Bible teaching conferences. These practices are designed to evoke the spiritual sensibilities of followers and draw attention to the concepts of spiritual power that are at work in Sierra Leone’s cultures. These pastoral practices have not only gained popularity among Charismatic Christians but have slowly begun to infiltrate and re-configure the pastoral ministry of non-Charismatic churches. This presents a new pastoral context for the exercise of church ministry in Evangelical churches who have been forced to introduce such practices in their weekly meetings and Sunday worship services. The fact that Evangelical churches have shown this measured willingness to allow such practices is a pointer to theological education that the changing landscape in worship where spontaneity now characterizes

33 A similar pattern in the formation of Charismatic churches has been recorded in Malawi. See Klaus Fiedler, “The Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements in Malawi in Cultural Perspective,” Religion in Malawi 9 (1999), 33-35.
liturgy needs to be critically examined and factored into a curriculum for the pastoral formation of church leaders.

Community Development and Social Transformation
Traditionally, denominations have used schools, hospitals and church buildings to engage the wider society. This action had a positive impact that resulted in the translation of the gospel into local languages, the development of the human capital that saw the new African élite taking over the government from the colonial authorities, and the introduction of better healthcare and curative alternatives to treating diseases. While this was done however, the ecclesial emphasis that had separated church and state meant that the churches had to maintain silence on issues that are seen as the root causes of years of corruption, bad governance and poverty that eventually resulted in the outbreak of the rebel conflict in the 1990s. That war impelled the churches to be more involved in the distribution of relief supplies, organizing trauma healing and counselling sessions, as well as accompanying the government and warring factions to negotiate peace and seek reconciliation. Theological education institutions supported the work of the churches by introducing new degree programmes that specialized in community development and social transformation courses. Although the usefulness of these courses is no longer in doubt, many voices are worried that theological education is in danger of losing its primary focus.

Contextual and Cultural Relevance
Sierra Leone’s cultural context and the practices associated with it have not changed. The majority of the cultural, traditional and religious practices that help people derive meaning from the multifaceted experiences of life are still very much alive. Many people still hold secret society events where initiation ceremonies prepare young people to meaningfully participate in community life as adults.34 Many others regularly observe ancestral rituals and have a preference for polygamous marriages. Traditional beliefs such as spirit possession and diabolical activities perpetrated by witchcraft still dominate the spiritual landscape. However, the questions now put to this context, particularly by the young educated urban élite who have become the most faithf

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of the churches, have significantly changed. Two examples of questions proffered by the urban élite suffice as illustration. First, in light of Exodus 20:12, Matthew 15:4, Mark 7:10 and Ephesians 6:2, what would be a biblically appropriate response to one's ancestors after conversion? Second, given the provisions of Exodus 22:18 and Leviticus 20:27, how can the church deal with persons who openly acknowledge their involvement in witchcraft and sorcery? These questions challenge various positions on culture once held by the churches and call for answers that explain the contextual nature and cultural relevance of the ministry of the churches. This means that theological education needs to create training programmes that address cultural and contextual issues raised by these questions in a biblically sound manner. Perhaps theological education needs to encourage students to progress beyond merely taking courses in African Traditional Religion to writing thesis that deal biblically with the issues of spiritual warfare and demonic possession, because these are increasingly becoming the pastoral issues that churches have to face. Academic studies that critically examine these practices can enhance the effectiveness of the ministry of the churches.

Conclusion
This survey of the trajectory of theological education points to certain currents that leave open a number of questions that merit discussion and reflection among practitioners involved in the delivery of theological education. Four of the most pressing questions are discussed below: First, are we seeing a gap developing between the biblical text and the content of theological education? Although it is agreed that theological education should be based upon a carefully constructed exegesis of the Bible, yet there appears to be less focus on the biblical text, and a greater focus on courses dealing with community development and social transformation.

Training programmes for pastoral formation require biblical truth and depth if they are to help build healthy churches. Therefore, Sierra Leone's theological education programmes should return to a greater focus on the biblical text. The aim of this call is to prevent the churches in Sierra Leone from reverting to the era of Christo-paganism that Byang Kato vigorously fought against.

Second, what is the precise cultural relevance of the present theological education programmes on offer in Sierra Leone? We noted that the post-independence attempts to free theological education from its western accretions brought about a renewed awareness among practitioners that there must be a connection between theological education and cultural relevance. This need is
further buttressed by the Charismatic pastoral practices that draw freely from concepts in Sierra Leone’s traditions that deal specifically with the exercise of spiritual power. This demands that theological education must convey a proper understanding of the place that spiritual power has for pastoral ministry and church growth.

Third, to what extent have the many contemporary social issues that Sierra Leone has endured impacted the content of theological education programmes? Sierra Leone’s period of rebel insurrection brought to the fore discussions about the role that theological education should play in helping to (re-)shape the churches’ agenda on poverty, lack of good governance, gender disparity and ecological issues, among others. While courses have been introduced that have enriched the theology curriculum or brought in new non-theology bachelor’s degree programmes, the question that one might still ask is, are theology graduates effectively prepared to face the demands of pastoral ministry in a context where emerging social concerns threaten the people’s daily life? Theological education programmes, particularly those offered at the master’s level or higher, must ensure that theology students are adequately prepared to engage seriously with the wider society in a manner that reflects the nature of God’s love in Christ Jesus. Such programmes of formation are believed to honour Christ, prepare theology students to assume leadership roles that benefit the church, and also serve the greater good of society.

Finally, isn’t it time for the university, denominational and Charismatic models of theological education to collaborate in order to achieve their goals? If this were to occur, one could foresee that theological education would be better placed to benefit from the meagre resources available to the churches that support theological education. The churches are longing for theological education programmes that train the minds/hearts, hands/feet and eyes/feelings of pastors and church workers who should radiate the love of Christ in a rapidly changing context plagued by numerous problems. Theological education cannot afford to settle for rivalry and competition as it seeks to fulfil the mandate of training the next generation of church and societal leaders who will be passionate about their faith and share what they have learned with other competent leaders. Such a vision for biblically-based and contextually relevant ministry calls for dialogue that must begin in the academy where theological education is delivered.
Chapter 5

Public Governance

Introduction and Scope
The accession of the Charismatic Movement and its growing popularity among the highly educated urban élite who are increasingly politically active, appear to have widened the sphere of influence of the churches in Sierra Leone. Because Charismatic Movements are based among the urban elite, the central government felt the need to adopt and use political phraseology that is shared by followers of the movement. Thanks to the work of Charismatic churches, ministries and networks, the average Sierra Leonean now has some measure of understanding of the meaning of the term prosperity. Thus, when President Ernest Bai Koroma's All Peoples Congress ruling party adopted the term prosperity in its 2013-2018 political manifesto dubbed Agenda for Prosperity (AfP 2013), Charismatics interpreted this move as evidence of the growing popularity and influence it has among Sierra Leonean society. After all, this warming of relations suggests that Charismatic Christianity is beginning to have a direct impact on the nature of public governance in much the same way as missionary Christianity had under colonialism in Sierra Leone, Africa’s oldest Protestant mission field.1 These developments raise two questions that probe the more prominent role of the Charismatic Movement in Sierra Leone’s public governance. Does this point to the dawning of a new era of greater cooperation between Sierra Leone's Charismatic faith communities and the state? Can this action be interpreted as a strategic ploy adopted by the state to improve its public standing among Charismatics who are becoming politically and economically active?

The scope of this article is to attempt to proffer a rejoinder to these questions in three perspectives: firstly, after proffering an overview of the relations between the state and religion, I examine the essential components of Charismatic theologies and how this reshapes their understanding of poverty, prosperity, good governance and socio-economic development in Sierra Leone. Secondly, the article surveys the mutating tapestry of public governance adopted by the ruling APC party in post-conflict Sierra Leone that saw the introduction of two political manifestos: The Agenda for Change 2008-2012 (AfC 2008) and Agenda for Prosperity 2013-2018 (AfP 2013). And thirdly, the article profiles areas where Sierra Leone’s Charismatic Movement has exerted influence on public

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1 Gilbert Olson, Church Growth in Sierra Leone.
governance. By examining these three issues, my hope is to use the Charismatic Movement’s public theology to illustrate the growing influence that Africa’s newer Charismatic Movements have in the public space, and how this deepens our understanding of the relationship between religion and contemporary African states.

Terminology and Methodology
In discussing the rise of Charismatic Movements in Sierra Leone, as it is the case elsewhere in Africa, it is necessary that a definition and delimitation be put forward to clarify the meaning of the term as used in this article. In the scholarly literature, there are two paths that have been taken to define Charismatic Movements. The first of these refer to the Charismatic revival that occurred in historic mainline churches and denominations in the 1960s. The most prominent of which was the Reverend Dennis J. Bennett’s admission at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California, that he had experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This prompted a flurry of confessions from those who had also received the baptism of the Holy Spirit but had chosen to remain as communicant members of those historic denominations. These historic churches that had been affected by this Charismatic renewal are not discussed in this article. A second meaning refers to those independent Charismatic churches, ministries and networks that developed outside of classical Pentecostalism or historic missionary and mainline churches and denominations from the late 1970s to the present. This new development within African Christianity has been variously described as Neo-Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Neo-Charismatic churches or simply Charismatic Movements. Following the sense suggested by this second definition and given that these new churches, ministries and networks are known as Charismatic Movements ever since they emerged in Sierra Leone in the 1980s, the term Charismatic Movements is employed throughout the article to refer to these new independent Charismatic churches, ministries and networks. But where there is need to specify one or the other, this is made clearer in the text.

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3 Dennis Bennet, *Nine o’clock in the Morning*.
Among its most pronounced theological practices, African Charismatic Movements are known to emphasize divine healing, miracles, demons and exorcism, dreams and their interpretation, prophecy, prosperity, anointing with olive oil and differentiating between spirits. These churches are most active in urban centres where they have a large following among the educated African élite who feel that the movement’s spirituality makes sense, addresses unresolved questions and enhance the cultural worldview of this constituency. The burgeoning of Charismatic churches in urban centres allow the movements to use contemporary media technologies to spread their message of prosperity, healing and power to a much wider audience. These Charismatic churches appear to be addressing themes that are concurrent with the African cultural sensibilities of its urban élite and youthful followers. While the cultural themes are themselves not new, the responses offered by Charismatics are certainly new. This does not surprise us because the growth of Christianity in the southern hemisphere implies that "what is to be expected from the South is a theology that addresses the setting in which it is produced."

In terms of methodology, this study is the product of my 2013 doctoral dissertation which was defended both at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit in Leuven, Belgium and the VU University in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. This study which was a missio-historical analysis of the contours of the Charismatic Movement required that I undertook three field research trips to Sierra Leone where interviews with key leaders of the movement were held. As part of this endeavour, I participated in the worship services and deliverance meetings organized by these churches and was given access to minutes, reports, books, audio and video CDs as well as other religious products marketed by the movements. Even though the central aim was to track down the movement’s history and contextual theological approaches to African culture, prosperity gospel and power theology, it was clear that Charismatics were feeling that their churches and theological practices were beginning to have an impact, albeit modestly, on public governance in Sierra Leone. Hence, using Charismatic theological teaching which derives inspiration from their interpretation and understanding of Holy Scripture as well as the socio-cultural contexts in which their ministries are based, this article takes up this supposed connection that Charismatic theologies are having on public governance in Sierra Leone.

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6 Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity; Clifton Clarke, Pentecostal Theology in Africa.
Overview of Religion and State relations in Africa

Consistent with the commitment to maintaining the rule of law, contemporary African democracies have emphasized the need for states to exist independently without any interference or undue influence from religion. When African states do so, they are mindful of the provisions of the 1987 African Charter where guarantees are enshrined that protects human rights as well as ensure the free profession and practice of religion (African Charter 1987). Billed as Africa's principal human rights instrument, the charter subscribes to the view that the separation of religion from the state has long been considered an essential element of democracy. States have a constitutional responsibility to protect and respect the right of individual citizens to exercise freedom of conscience. Consequently, the truths of religion are generally expected to be kept away from the agenda of politics. While some still hold on to such views, questions have now been raised against the validity of this thesis. This is because, for the most part, the thesis uses a normative narrative argument that perceives religion and the state as incompatible bed fellows. Objections such as these led some observers to argue that 'successful political democracy will inevitably require moral instruction grounded in religious faith.' It is therefore thought that genuine democracy makes it possible for religion and the state to coexist. In this merger of pluralistic coexistence, religion provides an underpinning that imbibes moral understanding in state functionaries as they exercise the political authority bequeathed to them by the electorate. Citizens of African states, it is argued, are to have unhindered liberty in the choice of faith and religious convictions that best enhance their traditional beliefs and cultural worldviews. The right of individuals to choose their faith convictions is seen as one that enhances the effectiveness of African democratic institutions. Even though the

state exercises its constitutional responsibility to provide citizens a reasonably safe environment where religious freedom is practised, the state itself cannot determine what particular religion each of its citizens is expected to follow. To do so would constitute an infringement of their civil liberties and violation of their constitutional right to exercise freedom of conscience.

Recently however, calls for religion to be separated from the state have been challenged by certain currents that are emerging from within African states themselves. These challenges border on two issues, namely: the nature of politics and impact of religion on the rest of society. Firstly, the need to widen its political support base among the citizenry seems to have prompted governing parties to take on board policies that are sympathetic to and concurrent with the belief systems espoused by the electorate. This tactical move is believed by many to increase the governing party’s chances of re-election, and with it the right to continue in power even after its constitutional mandate expires. Some African leaders are even reported to use religion to explain their divine right to govern. An appropriate example of how born-again Charismatic African leaders use religion to make a mark in politics is Fredrick J. T. Chiluba, president of Zambia. Shortly after coming to power, President Chiluba declared Zambia a Christian nation on the 29th December 1991. He went on to cleanse state house of the evil spirits that were supposedly left there by his predecessor and appointed born again Pentecostals in his cabinet. This declaration went through formal parliamentary procedures and was eventually enacted in the Zambian constitution in 1996.16 A second factor that has challenged the separation of the state from religion comes from the impact of religion on public life. Religion is now seen as a force that has capacity to re-shape public policy, impact governance and affect the rule of law. Religious developments in the Sahel region south of the Sahara Desert where al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is operating, Boko Haram’s long drawn destabilization of parts of northern Nigeria and neighbouring Chad, Niger and Cameroon where they want to institute a caliphate, and the attacks perpetrated by elements loyal to al-Shabab in Somalia, Kenya and much of Eastern Africa, suggests that Africa is gradually becoming the new frontier of Islamic radicalization and terrorist attacks. The spread of radicalized Islamic groupings and their use of barbaric terror tactics which pose serious threat to the very existence of the state is a cause for concern. African states have not only imposed stiffer policies that clamp down on religious radicalization which they believe violates the rule of law and order, but these so-

called Islamic terrorist groups are themselves being fought militarily. Thus, African governments are beginning to monitor the activities of any religious group operating within its territory that either expresses or pledges allegiance to such Islamic terrorist groups.

As a nation, Sierra Leone prides itself on its enviable position as an oasis of peaceful coexistence and interreligious tolerance in West Africa.\textsuperscript{17} 40% of the population of six million are Muslims. About 40% follow various elements of African religious and traditional beliefs, and close to 20% identify themselves as adherents of the Christian faith. Although Muslims are in the majority, Sierra Leone has not experienced any conflict along religious fault lines. As a result, government has made it its informal policy to commence proceedings in all state functions with Muslim and Christian prayers. Even in public appointments, efforts have been made to ensure that an even representation of appointees is made from persons who are members of Sierra Leone’s faith communities. This makes the country one rare example in West Africa where peaceful interreligious cooperation still exists today. The country’s constitution provides a safe space where religion is practised. The Interreligious Council of Sierra Leone established in 1997, has been successful in rallying support around issues of good governance, fair distribution of state resources, the promotion of human rights and sustenance of religious freedom.\textsuperscript{18}

Theologies of the Charismatic Movements

Sierra Leone’s Charismatic Movements emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s out of the youth evangelistic activities that were implemented at Sierra Leone’s educational institutions by Evangelical para-church organizations. After their founding, Charismatic churches took up determined attempts to re-invent Christianity and to make the faith relevant to the worldview needs of Sierra Leone’s growing urban élite. This growing cultural awareness and creative innovation demonstrated by Charismatics point to a change in the fortunes of the Christian faith in this country. Emerging ecclesial developments within Charismatic Movements point to signs that show the attempts taken by key leaders of the movement to organize their activities. As the movement has progressed from a position where it was accused of "sheep stealing" from

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Turai} Thomas Mark Turay, "Civil Society and Peace Building: The Role of the Inter Religious Council of Sierra Leone" \textit{Accord} 9 (2009): 53.
\end{thebibliography}
mainline denominations, to a position where its contribution to evangelism and church growth is beginning to be recognized, Charismatics are capitalizing on these gains by establishing what they describe "covenant brotherhood and comradeships." This move began in 1999 with the establishment of the *Alliance of Full Gospel Ministers*. Led by Apostle Moses Kay, the alliance aims to build the spiritual lives of Sierra Leonean "full-gospel ministers" with the biblical principles that enhances their capacity for growth as they seek the end-time harvest. But it soon became clear that the aims of the alliance were compromised by the excesses of prosperity theologies and its inability to lobby the central government in order to offer the movement’s perspective over important national issues. Therefore in 2002, a new body named *Pentecostal Fellowship of Sierra Leone* was established to represent the interests of Charismatic churches. Now led by Bishop Jonathan A. Cole, the fellowship claims to be the fourth voice of the church after the *Council of Churches in Sierra Leone, Evangelical Fellowship of Sierra Leone* and *Roman Catholic Church*. Although the fellowship has been working assiduously to improve the ecumenical standing and general image of Charismatics in Sierra Leone under the inspiring leadership of Bishop Cole, however it is been accused for steering too close to the seat of political power and advocating for ethical civility as well as pastoral chastity within its ranks. Even though this rigid position has improved its public standing, it meant that the fellowship has struggled to make its mark within the rank and file of the movement. In 2010, Bishop Abu Koroma, who was part of the founding members of the fellowship, established a new Charismatic organization under the name *Strategic Evangelistic Network*. The expressed aim of this new network is to empower evangelists and pastors with the required skills that can help them evangelize the lost and plant Bible-believing and Charismatic churches across Sierra Leone. While this remains the core business of the network, many within Charismatic churches believe that internal rivalry among Charismatic prelates, could perhaps be a likely explanation and driving force for which this new network was constituted. Even though it must be pointed out that all of these Charismatic organizations claim to be the official representation of the movement in Sierra Leone, however the rate at which new bodies are founded

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and fall off the way side over the most trivial matters, does indicate fragmentation and lack of unity in the movement.

Indeed, Charismatics in Africa whose members are the most enthusiastic Christians on the continent, are involved in local, national, regional and global missions. The movement's clergy are among the growing army of Christian leaders who are serious about the study of Holy Scripture and are seeking ways by which they can apply the pristine message of the Christian gospel to the changing socio-political context of contemporary Sierra Leone. These youthful 'born again' Charismatics see themselves as moral crusaders who are engaged in programs of social action that are expected to lead to political reform. This Charismatic emphasis that stresses the need for the regenerate believer to be born again is an important marker which confers upon them a new social identity. Charismatics believe that this new social marker puts them in a position that enables them to impact the wider civil society for the betterment of all citizens. These ecclesiastical developments brought upon Sierra Leone's religious frontier by the Charismatic Movement is certainly new and thus invites critical investigations to determine whether there are any connecting threads with the theological currents that continues to reshape the identity of the movement.

Prosperity theologies are arguably the most pervasive of the innovations of Charismatic Movements in Sierra Leone and much of Africa. Many non-Charismatic Christians get first-hand orientation with the movement through the eloquence of its preachers and their avid display of material wealth and prosperity. Prosperity theologies are perhaps the most widely celebrated but least understood theological practices of African Charismatics. Among others defining pointers, prosperity theologies teach that good health and abundance in material possessions are signs of the blessings God has deposited upon the life of the born-again Christian. Preachers of the prosperity gospel believe that God's generosity which was first bestowed upon Abraham is also available to every believer today. This Abrahamic promise can be accessed, claimed and possessed by the believer if they can exercise faith, sow a seed (usually understood to be a financial token) and are anointed with olive oil by key leaders of the movement.

Because prosperity theologies cohere with the African need for total human well-being, health and acquisition of material possessions, and given that the lifestyle

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22 Dena Freeman, *Pentecostalism and Development*.
of its proponents often mirror the successful lifestyle envisaged by this teaching, the prosperity gospel has become an indispensable hallmark of the Charismatic Movement.

It does appear that prosperity theologies have been successfully integrated in the nation’s discourse on public governance because of the magnanimous interpretation of cultural and Scriptural approaches to material wellbeing. Firstly, in Sierra Leone’s cultural, religious and traditional perspectives, when individuals accrue wealth, enjoy good health and possess material wellbeing, they are generally believed to be living in harmony with the spirit world. The acquisition of material wealth therefore requires the maintenance of a harmonious relationship between the spiritual and physical realms, as well as the worlds of the ancestors and the living. This understanding is a necessary safety net that counterbalances the obnoxious activities perpetrated by witchcraft. Ill health, misfortune and bad luck are believed to be caused by demons whose primary purpose is the diminution of human life. Spiritual healing, deliverance and exorcism are essential elements in restoring health and wellbeing. The fact that African traditional religion is meant to ensure fertility, abundance and longevity, when individuals succeed in all endeavours of life, their success is understood as having originated from the benevolence of the Supreme Being, ancestors or divinities. This cultural background provided suitable exigencies upon which prosperity theologies found an already fertile ground to quickly thrive. Charismatics approach the Christian faith and the multifaceted experiences of life from a context that is shaped by their African cultural values and spiritual heritage. There is therefore a strong, and often subconscious preference to deploy these cultural beliefs in church and pastoral ministry in ways that help Charismatics better divulge Christian concepts.

Secondly, the Charismatic perspective on Holy Scripture also disclose their understanding of health, wealth and material wellbeing. Prosperity theologies are regarded as teaching that God’s desire is to bless his people - particularly regenerate believers - with material and spiritual prosperity. Using the experiences of Abraham - especially those instances that have to do with his call and commission (Genesis 12:1-4; Hebrews 6:13-15), Charismatics are convinced that God always desire to bless his people. From the analogy of Abraham, Charismatics regard God’s promise of blessing as a kind of covenant which was valid for Abraham and his seed. Charismatics see a tripartite dimension to the

26 Dena Freeman, Pentecostalism and Development, 13.
28 E. Bolaji Idowu, African Traditional Religion, x.
blessing that prosperity brings: body, soul and spirit (3 John v 2). Charismatics believe that God’s grace offers the regenerate both salvation and the right to live in prosperity. In order for the benefits of salvation to be fully realized, the new convert has to take discipleship seriously. Furthermore, salvation brings about a new sense of work ethics, obedience, and prosperity (Deuteronomy 5:33). Therefore, the believer in much the same way as was Abraham, needs to heed the call to faith. After conversion, believers are to sever all ties with their former way of life and commit to following Jesus Christ. God’s prosperity requires of the believer the need to seek first the kingdom of God and all its righteousness (Matthew 6:33). This decision ushers them to the new covenant and the right to enjoy its blessings. Thus, the narrative of conversion opens countless possibilities for hard work, excellence and prosperity in this life.

When Charismatics began teaching prosperity theologies from their attractive and well-built sanctuaries, the general public swiftly bought into these doctrines. This was because they saw convergences between the teaching and their cultural and traditional worldview. The Charismatic explanation that Holy Scripture actually supports believers in their quest to acquire material prosperity and wellbeing attracted many more people to the movement. This cultural and biblical matrix is presented in ways that addresses the many unresolved questions that once confronted the churches. The CM’s use of Scripture and culture are meant to address the existential needs of its members that had been ignored by the churches.29 Because it is through an African cultural context that Christianity is received,30 it therefore seems tenable for Charismatics to argue in favour of using this cultural context to express more representatively the Christian faith.31

Sierra Leone’s Post-war Public Governance Structure
In 2002, Sierra Leone began the process of recovering from a brutal eleven-year rebel war that had engulfed this tiny, poor West African country. The horrendous rebel insurrection received international notoriety because of its excessive use of crude forms of brutality that included the maiming of hands and limbs, rape and child soldiers among its fighting forces.32 The rebels had opined that their armed struggle was motivated by the social apathy that ensued from years of misrule and one-party dictatorship. Many believed that the transformation of Sierra

29 Irene John, “Charismatics and Community,” 134.
Leone into a one-party republican state, the rampant spread of corruption and extreme forms of endemic poverty among its citizens who were consistently classified at the bottom of the human development index throughout the 1980s, and the dubious activities of foreign actors who were only interested in profiting from the lucrative diamond industry, explains the protracted nature in which the rebel war was prosecuted.33

The deteriorating political crises brought upon the nation by a ruthless rebel war prompted collective action from the international community. With help from Great Britain, the UN and ECOWAS, a peace accord was brokered between the government and rebel elements. A Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Special Court for Sierra Leone were established to try those who bore the greatest responsibility, address impunity as well as consolidate the peace.34 Post war general elections organized in 2002 and 2007 were generally perceived as being free and fair. Ahmed Tejan Kabbah’s Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP) that had been in power during and after the war years lost power in 2007. This was blamed on the party’s inability to properly implement the economic programs that had been funded by international donor agencies (BTI 2014). The unlikely party to emerge as winner in those elections was the erstwhile opposition All Peoples Congress (APC), a party that had been blamed for Sierra Leone’s poverty and political woes. Under its newly elected leader Ernest Bai Koroma, the APC set out to govern post-war Sierra Leone along the lines of two political manifestos. Using the revivalist concepts of change and prosperity that had been popularized by the Charismatic Movements, the APC-led government creatively marketed its belief that a change in the way public governance is exercised will eventually put Sierra Leone back on the path to the prosperity its citizens so desperately needed.

Agenda for Change
After coming to power, President Ernest Bai Koroma initiated a rebranding of the APC so that the party could rid itself of the allegations of corruption, nepotism and misrule's that had contaminated its political identity. To effectively do so, the party quickly distanced itself from the insensitive policies foisted upon the country’s weak economy by previous administrations. This move saw the

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drawing up of the * Agenda for Change* (AfC). This new governance programme was adopted in 2008 and lasted until 2012. AfC was presented to the population as the nation’s second-generation poverty reduction strategy paper. Four priority areas were identified in the AfC. First, the programme sought to provide reliable power supply to the country, through improving management and regulation of the energy sector, strengthening revenue collection and increasing generating capacity.\(^{35}\) Second, AfC pursued the development of agribusiness because of the possibilities it represents in food security, revenue generation and wealth creation among citizens.\(^{36}\) Third, AfC was to develop a national transportation network to enable the movement of goods, services and people, thereby facilitating increases in investment and economic activity across the country.\(^{37}\) Fourth, in order to sustain national progress, AfC was to build on human development through the provision of improved social services that were all but destroyed throughout the war years. Free healthcare for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under five years, was especially identified as a crucial path that can stem the high rate of infant and maternal mortality.\(^{38}\) By emphasizing energy, transportation, agriculture and improved social services, the AfC got off to a good start. As a program of governance, the AfC relished the belief that Sierra Leone had both the human and natural resources that can assure the prosperity and betterment of its citizens. Working in partnership with key stakeholders and faith-based organizations, AfC did put in motion a strategy that began the herculean task of addressing widespread poverty, hunger, unemployment and high infant and maternal mortality.

**Agenda for Prosperity**

Although initial progress was made, it was the *Agenda for Prosperity* (AfP) adopted in 2013 that pushed forward the gains achieved by President Ernest Koroma’s first term in government. Billed as the third-generation poverty reduction strategy paper, AfP undertakes a bold ambition to help lift Sierra Leone out of poverty and into middle income status. The AfP hopes to achieve this by focussing efforts on eight strategic pillars: diversified economic growth, managing natural resources, accelerating human development, international competitiveness, labour and employment, social protection, governance and


\(^{36}\) Earnest Koroma, “The Agenda for Change,” 2.


\(^{38}\) Earnest Koroma, “The Agenda for Change,” 3.
public sector reform, and gender and women's empowerment.\textsuperscript{39} Under this new agenda, the government is convinced that Sierra Leone has all the resources needed to succeed. Its population had been kept in poverty through the inability of previous leaders to address adequately issues of systemic inequality. As a consequence, it is envisaged that AfP will draw on Sierra Leone’s natural resource endowments as the motor that will propel the economy. AfP will be a model in responsible natural resource exploitation, with revenues directed towards transforming and developing the country in a framework of sustainable environmental protection.\textsuperscript{40} The key enablers that will ensure the success of AfP are sound macroeconomic and fiscal fundamentals, and a society with strong institutions of governance grounded in respect for the rule of law and maintenance of human rights. Such a society includes women and youth who are socially, economically and politically empowered and are allowed to take up their rightful place in society. Unlike previous interventions undertaken by the APC-led government, the AfP was carefully designed to help Sierra Leone overcome the lurking challenges to its economic development.\textsuperscript{41} This is because the AfP's vision relies heavily on the exploitation and use of Sierra Leone’s rich natural resources. Mindful of the potential for generating significant revenues as well as distorting development, the AfP took necessary precautions to forestall any degradation of the environment that hampers future exploitation.\textsuperscript{42} Possible internal and external threats to achieving the goals of AfP were identified. A national technical team in the office of the president that coordinates the response was set up to address these concerns raised by these dangers. According to the AfP, prosperity for Sierra Leoneans will be measured by the levels of access to reasonable health care, high quality education, and equal opportunities for all, regardless of age, gender, religion and tribe. Special attention will be placed on addressing the needs of disabled and vulnerable communities who live at the margins of society. Thus, improvements in the quality of life for ordinary citizens will be reflected in incremental changes in the annual Human Development Index (HDI) prepared by UNDP.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{39} AfP 2013: xix-xvii.
\textsuperscript{40} AfP 2013: xvii.
\textsuperscript{41} AfP 2013: xvii.
\textsuperscript{42} AfP 2013: xiv.
\textsuperscript{43} AfP 2013: 2.
Charismatic Appropriations of Sierra Leone’s Public Governance

Although Ernest Bai Koroma’s government had accepted the popular cultural and religious view that attributed Sierra Leone’s poverty and deprivation to evil and spiritual forces, the remedy he proposes to help address this situation of emaciation was purely economic in nature. This was clearly articulated in his AfC and AfP manifestos, where Sierra Leone was to be governed on the basis of sound business and economic policies. If harnessed properly, national resources can bring about prosperity for all citizens. Given this political and socioeconomic platform, what is the Charismatic response to government’s AfC and AfP? The answer to this question calls for a gravitation away from a linear reading of the Charismatic understanding of Sierra Leone’s poverty, to a mediated assessment of the movement’s political and economic theologies.

First, contrary to public opinion, Charismatics do not share the belief that Sierra Leone is a poor country. There is all that is needed for the country to achieve prosperity. The land is fertile and richly endowed with abundant deposit of mineral, marine and natural resources that can transform the land to a paradise for its people. More than merely the activities of corrupt public officials, Charismatics believe that Sierra Leone’s misery is caused by demonic forces who are bent on frustrating well-intentioned national development plans. These demonic forces need to be exorcised from high places and the land freed from all accretions that have been inflicting this debilitating grip of endemic poverty on the nation.44 Bishop Akintayo Sam-Jolly, presiding prelate of Living Word of Faith Outreach Ministries International and public relations officer of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Sierra Leone, uses the analogy of the demonic delay of the angel sent to Daniel, to ground his teaching about the negative impact territorial demons have on Sierra Leone.45 Charismatics are of the opinion that those who serve the nation are to be born again believers. When righteous and god-fearing persons are elected to serve in politics, their election reassures the nation of its eventual prosperity. The CM is convinced that it needs to contribute moral crusaders in the work force, who using their faith, will restore hard work, honesty and integrity in public service. To make sure that this happens, Charismatics are to seek public office through participation in local, regional and national elections.

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45 Akintayo Sam-Jolly, Apostolic Passion and Authority (Freetown, Sierra Leone: Living Word Publications, 2007), 94 – 99.
Many Charismatics now believe that in order to address African poverty and oppression a forthright witness is required that presses for economic, social and even political change. Therefore, those who are elected or appointed to public office must be born again believers who bring their faith in public service. It is with the integrity of their hearts and skillfulness of their hands that Charismatics hope to guide Sierra Leone on the path to prosperity (Psalm 78:72).

The second consideration in the quest to articulate the Charismatic Movement’s response to public governance is a careful examination of the movement’s political theology. Even though this appears to be a recent addition to its theological practices, nevertheless Charismatics regard themselves as transformed individuals who have a moral responsibility to change society. This change requires Charismatic participation in focussed activities that promote genuine business, generate economic development, and facilitate political reform. While acknowledging that sociological tools are necessary for individual believers to succeed in the public sphere, Christians who are politically active need to be aware that spiritual warfare is also a central component of their daily routine. Therefore, when Charismatics acquire business deals and contracts, or get into elected positions, they must bring their faith convictions to bear directly upon the decisions they make. The theology that beckons political involvement is driven by the Charismatic belief that God is personally involved in the affairs of everyday life. God’s daily presence in the lives of born-again Christians is widely recognized. Because of the Charismatic conviction that ‘God is not a vague and distant figure but a reality to be encountered,’ it is customary to seek his involvement in every human undertaking. From their reading of Scripture, Charismatics leaders such as Bishop J. A. Cole, president of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Sierra Leone, find that Jesus was not only familiar with the marketplace but also recruited his disciples from there (Mark 6:3). The apostle Paul (Acts 9:1-16) and many other early Christians (Acts 9:36-43; 10:1; 20:33-35) who had supported his ministry were actively involved in shaping the politics of their day. He argues that national politics cannot be left in the hands of unbelievers, because those nations who do so risk bringing untold suffering upon its citizenry (Job 34:30; Proverbs 11:10; 28:12; 29:2). Through the Pentecostal Fellowship of Sierra Leone, Bishop Cole mobilizes Charismatic churches and

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48 Dena Freeman, Pentecostalism and Development, 19.
ministries to understand their civic responsibilities and exercise their right to vote and enter elected politics.

And third, Charismatics have also taken lead roles in establishing business enterprises that provide employment opportunities and much needed private sector development.\textsuperscript{50} Charismatic involvement in economic activities comes from their understanding of the Christological command to do business until Christ returns (Luke 19:13). To some this might come as a surprise because it used to be argued that Pentecostal/Charismatic eschatology did prevent the movement from seeking ways by which they can address and relieve human suffering in the present age. The common belief shared by early forbearers of the movement was why waste time on a world that will soon disappear?\textsuperscript{51} Interestingly, this eschatological expectation of a world that will progressively descend into turmoil and eventually disappear no longer holds true. By reapplying belief in the eschaton, Charismatics are presenting themselves as people who have been entrusted with exceptional gifts and talents that corresponds with the manifestation of the Holy Spirit who lives in them (1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Peter 4:10). As was to be expected of the king's servants in Jesus' parable (Luke 19:11-27), these gifts and talents, must be put to productive use in anticipation of Christ's soon return. This renewed understanding of eschatology inspires the need to be economically productive.

Prosperity Theologies and the African Nation State

Are prosperity theologies inimical to the development of the African nation-state? There are growing objections from some commentators who think that prosperity theologies have no positive impact on the development of the African nation-state appear to be growing. The most prominent and critical observer who uses social science research to ground his criticism of the theological innovations of Africa's new Christianity is Paul Gifford. In both his Ghana's New Christianity and Christianity, Modernity and Development in Africa,\textsuperscript{52} Gifford posits that prosperity and deliverance theologies are in fact Africa's biggest impediment to the development of a prosperous nation state. Because such doctrines come from prestigious and highly influential Pentecostal and Charismatic prelates (patrons), it becomes difficult for challenges to be brought against the pastoral

\textsuperscript{50} Allan Anderson, \textit{An Introduction to Pentecostalism}.
authority of these big men of God by the congregants (clients). However, as I have shown from the Charismatic church context in Sierra Leone, Gifford’s thesis is seriously deficient. Three comments suffice as illustrations of the weaknesses of Gifford’s criticisms of such doctrines. First, Gifford might still be bound by the assertion that given its view on the eschaton, African Pentecostalism, like expressions of the faith elsewhere, is oblivious to the economic, social and political pathologies bedevilling those nations where its ministries are based. The suspicion that Pentecostalism’s affinity to an apocalyptic spirituality causes the movement to withdraw from involvement with the rest of society is changing.53 Guided by their understanding of the call to do business until Christ returns, and mindful of the shifting social values as well as weaknesses in state institutions, African Charismatics have taken an exception to this isolationist posture.54 African Charismatics are seeking ways to positively impact nations for the good of all through the establishment of educational institutions, businesses enterprises and active involvement in politics. It therefore seems to be inappropriate to continue to think that African Pentecostals and Charismatics are apolitical and otherworldly.55 From her analysis of the Nigerian Charismatic context, Ruth Marshall points out that Pentecostalism is the single most important socio-cultural force in southern Nigeria, whose influence cuts across the political arena.56 This paradigm of Pentecostal and Charismatic support, involvement and influence on ruling parties in Africa has been noted in Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Zambia, among others.57 Second, while Gifford must indeed be commended for pointing out that Africa’s new Christianity is most active in urban centres where it serves as a major attraction for youth from poorer backgrounds, it is surprising that he does not recognize, as others have done, that by aligning itself with the fortunes of the urban élite, Africa’s new Pentecostalism is actually imbibing a sense of work ethics that promotes the industry. This, as our study of the Sierra Leone Charismatic context has shown, remains a serious drawback in Gifford’s analysis. By working with this segment of society, African Pentecostalism is challenging aspects of

traditional life and culture that holds back socioeconomic development and helping individual believers foster and pursue their developmental aspirations.\textsuperscript{58} Third, the fact that African Pentecostalism, in contrast to NGOs, recognizes the role of spirituality and the African religious psyche as serious impediments to facilitating community development, must be pointed out as an important launch pad for involvement with the rest of society. As Dena Freeman reminds us, because 'Pentecostalism incorporates a holistic ontology that fits well with the lived experiences of many Africans and accords with most traditional African ontologies,'\textsuperscript{59} the movement is gradually becoming involved in addressing issues of systemic corruption and poverty in Africa beyond what obtains when they were first founded. Further, the contributors to Freeman’s edited volume argue that Pentecostalism’s holistic ontology appears to be more effective agents of social change and transformation than are NGO’s in Africa. This merger of the spiritual and physical in a holistic way goes to show how Africa’s newer Pentecostal and Charismatic movements are taking steps to address issues of public governance in their respective countries.\textsuperscript{60} Hence for Pentecostals, the world is no longer a place that will progressively deteriorate and from which the faithful are to escape. Instead, the world now becomes a place to engage with and work harder to make better.\textsuperscript{61}

**Religious Radicalization, Charismatics and Public Engagement**

Given that the rise of religious radicalization has resulted to deaths and major disturbances in some parts of Africa, states have taken interest in regulating the activities of certain faith communities. According to some states, this greater censorship move does not constitute a violation of any human rights conventions to which they are signatories. Rather, this action is intended to protect the free profession and expression of faith and religious beliefs. While African states are busy dealing with occasional outburst of Islamic religious extremism, some faith communities used this opportunity to navigate their way to positions where they began to exert influence on governance. Sierra Leone’s Charismatic Movements which grew out of the revival and evangelistic outreach programs that had been implemented by the churches is one such example. This new social context in


\textsuperscript{59} Dena Freeman, \textit{Pentecostalism and Development}, 22.

\textsuperscript{60} Cf. Allan Anderson, \textit{An Introduction to Pentecostalism}, rev exp ed., 284.

which Charismatic faith communities play a central role, points to a number of observations about Charismatic public engagement that merit further discussion. This venture is useful if the influence of Charismatic Movements on public governance in Sierra Leone and other parts of Africa is to be fully appreciated.

The first of these is the religious interpretation that connects the derivatives of poverty to traditional African spiritual undertones. Both Charismatic churches and government agree that there is a spiritual derivation to Sierra Leone's poverty. This thesis finds support in the Charismatic reading of Holy Scripture and Sierra Leone's traditional and religious worldview. Sierra Leoneans lack an appropriate discourse by which they can explain the reasons why although the country is enormously rich in natural mineral resources, its people are consistently classified among the poorest in the world. Many are led to think that systemic corruption, though crucial, should not be understood as the sole cause of the nation's poverty. Charismatics opine that Sierra Leone's material poverty is perceived to be the result of evil spiritual forces who are thought to have been offended by the negligent attitude of the wider community. Apostle Moses Kay, president of the *Alliance of Full Gospel Ministers*, is one Charismatic leader who thinks that this poverty is coming from ill motivated persons who have entered into contractual agreements with evil spiritual forces to wreak havoc on the community and hinder national progress. At his annual 'Fire for Fire Conventions,' Apostle Kay notes that such poverty will only be ameliorated if the spiritual causes responsible for the nation's penury are dealt with. Prosperity summits, national days of prayer, fasting and deliverance have been organized by Charismatics to exorcise demonic forces from public offices.  

Spiritual power acquired through anointing with consecrated olive oil is believed to enhance the competence of born-again Charismatics who serve the state. Their approach was supported by the president who issued an executive order, where he called on the nation to fully participate in such events whenever they are organized by Charismatic faith communities.  

All of these calls for a change in the nature of governance. For Charismatics, conversion opens countless possibilities for national prosperity.  

Transformed citizens are to make a complete break from their traditional past, which for the most part is viewed negatively. This severing of past traditions is a necessary arbiter that guarantees one's betterment and

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progress in life. Charismatics therefore regard conversion as an act that predisposes one to live an authentic life of service to Christ, the church and the poor. Thus, the revivalist concepts of change and prosperity quickly influenced the formation of government’s AfC and AfP manifestos.

The second consideration that ensues from this context is the new sense of work ethics promoted by Charismatics in the work place. Sierra Leone’s Charismatic Movements believes that it has a sacred duty to contribute honest persons whose hard work in public service is evidence of their salvation. Unlike the 'name it and claim it' or positive confession principle often associated with African prosperity theologies, Charismatics leaders like Bishop JA Cole, president of the *Pentecostal Fellowship of Sierra Leone* now believe that hard work pays. Bishop Cole teaches that God rewards hard work and laziness is a recipe for poverty. Using Proverbs 6:10-11; 10:4; 12:24; 19:15; Ecclesiastes 10:18 to ground his teaching on work ethics, Bishop Cole argues that bribes are to be rejected (Exodus 23:8) and hard work, fairness and honesty are fruits that confirm the Charismatic believer’s public Christian testimony (Matthew 7:16-20). Moreover, Charismatic churches have established scholarship schemes that offer support to members enrolled in higher educational institutions. This contribution agrees with their belief that higher-level education makes it possible for one to be gainfully employed. Employment brings with it upward social status and access to disposable income. As a result, upon the successful completion of their study courses, university graduates are celebrated by Charismatic churches. Further, Charismatics opted to back the position of government that responsible exploitation of natural resources and the discrete management of proceeds thereof will bring about the much-needed national prosperity. It was therefore necessary that Charismatics are seen to support initiatives that promote high ethical standards and anti-corruption campaigns in the public and private sector. Because they are accountable to a higher power, bribery, corrupt and dubious practices that are usually found in African states must be rejected (Ecclesiastes 12:14, Hebrews 4:12, and 1 Peter 4:5). Charismatic businesses were also established to tap into government’s diversification of the national economy as provided for in the AfP. This climate of economic liberalization has resulted in the upward social mobility of members of the Charismatic Movement.

**Conclusion**

This chapter attempted to situate the growing influence of religion (particularly Pentecostal and Charismatic faith communities) and its impact on the nature of public governance in Africa. The conclusion to be proffered from this trajectory, suggests that there appears to be greater cooperation between faith communities
and the government in Sierra Leone. This is obvious not only from governments use of phraseology common to the Charismatic Movement, but by its subscription to the argument that there is more to Sierra Leone's poverty than merely the activities of corrupt public officials. Even though greater interreligious cooperation may challenge the Charismatic quest for mediating evangelism and revival, an atmosphere of tolerance and peaceful coexistence results is more benefits that strengthens the cooperation between faith communities and the state. It is my contention therefore that this tolerance, if carefully managed, is poised to allow religious and faith communities to influence public governance for the good of the African continent.

The implications of all of this is the growing influence of Charismatic theological teaching on public governance in Africa. Sierra Leone’s government's periodic consultations with the religious body politic on important national issues does suggest that: (i) faith communities are effectively using their responsibility towards society to work for the good of the nation; and (ii) government’s desire to collaborate with faith communities and civil society organizations that aim to work for the common good of the citizenry. One would only hope that the various Charismatic churches, ministries and organizations in Sierra Leone would progress beyond petty splinters and be more focussed in their attempts to influence government’s public policy. The theology coming from Charismatic Movements must strive to incorporate the African religio-cultural context, because "theology is a cultural construct emanating from the struggle between faith and practice is reflective of the cultural, historical, economic and socio-political context arising out of life in community."65

Chapter 6

Christ’s Pre-eminence over Cosmic Powers

Introduction and scope
The pre-eminence and supremacy of Christ over seen and unseen cosmic powers in the ‘Christ hymn,’¹ is a central theme addressed by the author of Colossians. However, while the epistle is addressed to a group of first century Christians whose beliefs in supernatural realms are much similar to African Christians, little scholarly attempts have ascertained how the hymn’s enunciation of Christ’s superiority could be used to appropriate the supposed operation in the cosmos of angelic beings, evil spirits and demonic powers that pervade the spirit world of African Pentecostalism.² This is not a surprising development because inherited forms of missionary Christianity were accused of not dealing sufficiently with peoples lived pathologies and supernatural worldviews,³ nor did they reflect effectively on how the Bible must engage with Africans to help the faithful eliminate the anxiety of evil that African traditional religion brings to Christianity.⁴ Hans Mosicicke calls attention to this impasse when he makes this telling observation:

[…] an approach to Scripture that takes seriously its supernatural worldview and its mythological narratives possesses far greater

potential for reconciling the spirit world of ATR in African Christianity than the thin, rigid cosmic dualism of the early missionaries.\(^5\)

Besides accusations of weaknesses against earlier forms of missionary Christianity, African biblical scholars rarely take enough interest in understanding the extent to which Christ’s pre-eminence could illuminate African Christianity and the liturgical practices of the faith to be found among Africans. For instance, although it has been argued that “angelic hierarchy of thrones, powers, rulers and authorities [...] are subordinate to God and are not to be worshipped (Col 1:15-16; 1 Peter 3:22),” it remains unclear what constitutes an appropriate biblical theology of angels, demons and powers suited for the African church.\(^6\) Similarly, apart from affirming that “many Christians still fear malicious spiritual influences on their daily lives” for which many of these “Christians seek protection from spiritual specialists and spiritual beings due to lack of understanding or faith in the sufficiency of the powers of Christ to meet their spiritual needs,” no concrete biblical steps have been proffered by the Africa Study Bible to help African Christians deal with a supernatural worldview populated by spirit beings.\(^7\) If, as the authors of the Africa Study Bible have argued, “No voice can speak more powerfully to the unique issues and challenges of the Church in Africa than African voices,”\(^8\) one wonders why issues of angelic beings, demonic forces and evil spirits that seem to occupy the minds and hearts of African Christians has not received the attention it deserves in the volume.

Similarly, it could be argued that this attitude may correspond with Jerry Sumney who, while commenting for audiences in non-African contexts, came as close as to argue that “early Christians, along with everyone else in the ancient world (both Jews and Gentiles), believed in realms populated by numerous beings, some very powerful, [...]”.\(^9\) In both these examples however, there appear to be a failure to clarify the extent to which this Colossian understanding of spirit realms could be applied to the practical theological contexts of modern day Christians wherever they are situated.

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8 John Jusu, Africa Study Bible.
Whereas the superiority of Christ in relation to all spirit beings and realms of creation is unquestioned, “for by him all things were made, [...]” (1:16b, ESV), one misses what would have been expected of Christians who embody beliefs populated by spirit realms when they read this epistle. This is because when new converts respond to God’s offer of salvation they need to know what power their faith in Christ accrues to them. It is precisely for this reason that N. T. Wright makes a helpful comment when he writes:

What they need to know above all, if they are to grow as Christians, increasing in wisdom, power, patience and thanksgiving, is the centrality and supremacy of Jesus Christ. The more they get to know, and know about, Jesus Christ, the more they would understand who the true God is and what he’s done; who they are as a result; and what it means to live in and for him.10

The fact that sub-Saharan African Christians struggle to understand Christianity in cultures that are dominated by notions of angelic beings, evil spirits and demonic powers which generate “power-fear” worldviews,11 and because Africans are a people of deep spirituality,12 African Christianity in general and African theology in particular is challenged to help new converts comprehend primal spiritualities using biblical insights such as those drawn from Colossians and other epistles where similar themes are addressed. One could argue that this failure was especially favourable to Pentecostalism because its espousal of pneumatology resonated with Africa’s spiritual realities.13 This sub-Saharan African spiritual context which many argue presents remarkable similarities with Judeo-Christian worldviews, imply that the African church requires a new understanding of how Christ’s supremacy transcends the cosmic powers Pentecostalism claims to be fighting. In this chapter I respond to this impasse by offering insights from Colossians in three ways: first, I re-examines the ‘Christ hymn’ in other to frame the author’s understanding of Christ’s superiority over cosmic powers. Second, I reconstruct African Pentecostalism’s understanding of cosmic powers grounded in the three interlocking sources influencing the

movement. Third, I articulate how African Pentecostalism’s conceptualizations of cosmic powers could be reconciled with Christ’s pre-eminence outlined in the “Christ hymn.”

The ‘Christ hymn,’ Christ’s pre-eminence and cosmic powers
Colossians was written to a group of first century Christians who are struggling with supernatural cosmologies spread by false teachers in which they claim that there exist deadly cosmic powers at Colossae. In this epistle, Paul, wastes no time to clearly affirm that Christ is pre-eminently superior and incredibly powerful than the seen and unseen powers spoken of by false teachers. Because of Christ’s pre-eminence and superiority, those troubled Colossian Christians whose hearts and minds were bombarded by false doctrines, can take comfort in knowing that their faith in Christ has indeed ushered them under the authority of a far greater power than that spirit beings. Although the precise nature of the Colossian heresy that was negatively influencing the spiritual growth, peace and stability of the church is not known, however because these “false teachers were inculcating spurious doctrines and practices, demoting Christ from his position of unique pre-eminence,” the use of the “Christ hymn” gives clear indications why it is urgent for the writer to fight against the theological mischief perpetuated by false teachers.

Christ’s pre-eminence has been the subject of detailed analysis, not least from key figures in African church historiography whose theological thinking shaped the contours of early Christian orthodoxy. In the fourth century, Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria in Egypt wrote to defend the view of Christ as the first-born over all. In one of his many treaties, Athanasius argues:

15 Peter O’Brien, Colossians, Philemon, xxx.
16 N. T. Wright, The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon, 23.
17 See among others the following: Christopher R. Seitz, Colossians (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014); Paul E. Deterding, Colossians (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 2003); David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Love So Amazing: Expositions of Colossians 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995); A T Robertson, Paul and the Intellectuals: The Epistle to the Colossians (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959).
Jesus Christ was not called “first-born of all creation” because he came from the father, but because through him creation came to be. He is the Word and “he existed in the beginning with God ... and nothing was created except through him” (John 1:2 – 3). He is not one of the creatures that was created, but he already existed before creation (John 1:1). Jesus Christ is also called “first-born among many brothers and sisters” because of his relationship as a human with those who “love God and are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28 – 29). Jesus Christ is also called “first-born from the dead” because the resurrection of the dead is from him and after him.18

In Athanasius’ Christological exposé, Christ’s pre-eminence is related to three central ideas – Christ is head over humanity, creation and the new creation. These themes are directly related to the section in Colossians that explores the pre-eminence of Christ. I will briefly examine each of these characteristics in order to explain how Christ’s pre-eminence sharply contrast with the view perpetuated by false teachers among the believers in the infant church at Colossae. First, the hymn presents Christ as the head over humanity, Col 1:15. By connecting Christ to the eternal Father, the hymn confirms that Christ, rather than the cosmic powers, holds a place of prominence as the exact image of the invisible God. Therefore, the evil orchestrated by spirit beings cannot harm those who are in Christ. Second, the hymn proceeds to the created universe and affirms that Christ in head and has complete authority over all creation, Col 1:16–17. Here the author is believed to be aware of and have possibly used evidence from Genesis 1 and John 1 to confirm that Christ is the reason for creation and the one on whom the whole of creation depends. The act of creation rested upon Christ as both its cause and the one who sustains creation. For this reason, the false doctrines that speak of evil spirits and demonic powers, have no power whatsoever over the Christian. Third, the hymn concludes by affirming that Christ is head over the new creation, Col 1:18–20. By making this claim the hymn expands “the theme of Christ’s universal lordship,”19 and gives assurance that Christians have full protection and immunity by a greater power that resides within them, than the evil spiritual powers who are believed to be parading in the cosmos. In a short section, the author speaks of Christ, where he is not only presented as head of creation, but more importantly as head of the church. Through Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross, Christians have both gained access into the presence of God and enjoy peace with the eternal God. Here, they find grace, redemption, protection and mercy in Christ.

19 Peter O’Brien, Colossians, Philemon, xlv.
African Pentecostalism and cosmic powers

It is common knowledge nowadays that the forms of Christianity which were planted by early Protestant missionaries did choose to abandon any belief in the existence and influence of evil spirits and demons. The main argument from this received wisdom was that such practices were anachronistic ways of explaining spiritual phenomena which would be simply construed using psychological constructs developed by enlightenment thinking, and therefore must be consigned to the realms of fantasy literature. Therefore, at the emergence of Pentecostalism, African converts, who through the missionary literacy and translation projects had begun to conceive a dim view of the connections between biblical and African supernatural worldviews, were for the first time able to express their particular brand of Christianity in culturally convergent ways. African converts were able to read the Bible and hear its message speak in ways that make sense, address unresolved questions and enhance the cultural worldview of adherents where it itches most. Pentecostalism’s black historical roots and the faith’s interventionist’s ministry of the Holy Spirit which enables Pentecostal converts to uncover and claim biblical promises for daily living coalesced with the Bible’s supernatural worldviews to make this form of Christianity popular among African converts. Not surprisingly, this resurgence of Pentecostal Christianity in Africa allowed Philip Jenkins to conclude that it now appears that the Christianity that was born in Africa and Asia is, in our lifetimes, is not only returning to but making those continents its new home.

To better conceptualize African Pentecostalism’s understanding of cosmic powers and the narrative with which this spiritual phenomenon is articulated by key proponents of the movement, this chapter examines the sources that have inspired Pentecostalism’s theological permutations and attracted a large clientele among Africans, both on the continent and among the diaspora. Contemporary

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African Pentecostalism takes inspiration from three sources: (i) beliefs which Pentecostals argue point to a supernatural worldview of the Bible; (ii) Charismatic revivals mediated by Charismatic figures that are pivotal in shaping the history of this new African church development; and (iii) the African cultural context upon which the particular strand of Pentecostalism is experienced and practised.26 In the section that follows, I seek to explicate how each of these characteristics dialogues with the theological assessment of African Pentecostalism to inform its construal of the operations of cosmic powers.

The Bible’s supernatural worldview
Followers of African Pentecostalism desire to be identified as a people who deeply love and respect the Bible. This seriousness for upholding the authority of the Bible is meant to distinguish Africa’s newer Pentecostals from earlier expressions of indigenous Christianity on the continent which were viewed for the most part as syncretistic.27 For this crop of African Pentecostals, the use of the Bible in daily life serves both spiritual and mundane purposes. For instance, among Ghanaian Pentecostals the Bible functions as a repository of narratives in which God intervenes and reverses dangerous situations that obstructs prosperity.28 Hence, ordinary readings of the Bible are used to respond to pressing needs in a manner that is culturally sensitive.29 Sierra Leone’s Pentecostals believe that the Bible addresses directly the existential needs of church members, and provides spiritual power that subdues demonic forces that are bent on frustrating human flourishing.30 Pentecostals in Malawi use the Bible to affirm daily life experiences and justify its views on the infilling of the Holy Spirit.31 In Nigeria where the faith is perhaps most buoyant, Pentecostals argue that their biblical and theological beliefs have been carefully crafted from the
Bible. Such Bible reading exercises allow for the re-enactment of the Bible’s pneumatic experiences with the Holy Spirit in real life situations. Hence, the uses of the Bible in church and pastoral ministry contexts consciously avoid entanglement with known theological controversies as this is thought to undermine the credibility of Holy Scripture and hamper aggressive evangelism. Where such approaches could be considered fundamentalist, African Pentecostals insist that their choosing to use the Bible is to meet the needs of a largely non-academic, local and grassroots oriented setting. For African Pentecostals, the fact that a large portion of Jesus’ ministry was dedicated to healing, deliverance and exorcism (Matthew 4:24; 15:28; Luke 6:18 – 19; Mark 5:8 – 9), and because Jesus commanded his disciples to do likewise (Matthew 10:1, 8; Mark 6:13; Luke 10:17), they long for the display of such divine power in the life of ordinary Christians. This approach to the Bible coheres with the practical nature of the theologies to be found in the non-western world where the largest hotspots of global Christianity are located. For this reason, African Pentecostalism bemoans the church’s prolonged neglect of the similarities existing between the Bible and African supernatural worldviews. By recognizing this convergence and carefully evaluating the biblical material to mediate a proper understanding of the operations of cosmic powers, the African Christianity that Pentecostalism seeks to foster is thought to help the church understand the African traditional, cultural and religious worldview upon which Christianity continues to be received and practised. This development may suggest that African Pentecostal Christians are not as such reviving pagan practices that once characterize traditional society, but are trying to preach a

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strong and even pristine Christian message that seeks to be relevant to the local cultural context in which the faith is predicated.  

Charismatic Revivals in Africa
African Pentecostalism is also inspired by the rise of what is widely regarded as prophetic and charismatic figures whose theological narrative shapes its view on engaging in battles with cosmic spiritual powers and evil forces. African Pentecostalism ascribes to these prophets the ability to diagnose the problems of the past and speak positively to present predicament, commanding awful life situations to align to a future filled with blissful prosperity. These charismatic figures are believed to be raised by divine appointment to bring about periodic revivals that are designed to realign the African church to a place where it could experience New Testament Christianity. The prophetic figures themselves are persons whose conversion and call to pastoral ministry bears the hallmarks of divine mystery. Like the prophets of old, these charismatic figures are raised in times of great spiritual and moral apostasy to call for the return of God’s people back to the faith and to announce the arrival of God’s appointed time of favour. In what follows, I use two West African examples drawn from the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean Pentecostal church scene to illustrate how these beliefs play out.

Once described as the godfather of African Pentecostalism, the late Archbishop Benson Idahosa who founded the Church of God Mission in Benin City, Nigeria, remains a towering figure in the historiography of African Pentecostalism. Born in poverty, and left for dead due to poor health, Archbishop Idahosa’s life took a turn for the better when his mother refused to budge to the dictates of culture and returned to attend to the needs of her abandoned, sick and dying child. Thanks to that simple act of filial generosity, Archbishop Idahosa was rescued from the clutches of deprivation and later converted by an Igbo Pentecostal pastor who imparted basic biblical knowledge to his young mind. Working briefly as manager of a Bata Shoe store, Archbishop Idahosa resigned his position and founded the Church of God Mission. The growth of this ministry surprised many, because it soon attracted a wide array of admirers including African Pentecostal

clerics who had heard about his reported miraculous healing powers and exorcisms over those believed to be possessed by demons. Those who came to be trained at his All Nations for Christ Bible Institute were later consecrated as bishops and went on to spread his strand of Pentecostalism in many parts of Africa. During prayer sessions presided over by Archbishop Idahosa, people are reported to fall on the floor as they are slain by the Holy Spirit. It is reported that healings, deliverance and miracles of all kinds were reported to happen whenever Archbishop takes the pulpit to preach.43

Evangelist Mrs. Dora Dumbuya who founded Jesus Is Lord Ministry (JILM) in 1989 is Sierra Leone’s most prominent female church leader. Until she founded her Pentecostal church, Sierra Leone Pentecostalism was male dominated. However, this patriarchy was substantially transformed by her presence and preaching a simple message of faith in a God who works extraordinary miracles of healing and deliverance for the most unusual people in society. Converted in the early 1970s, Evangelist Dumbuya saw her native Sierra Leone eclipsed from the affluent society it had been under colonial rule, to socioeconomic deterioration and political misrule of the 1970s and 80s, resulting in a horrendous rebel war throughout the 1990s.44 In a context of poverty, Evangelist Dumbuya’s revivalist message spoke up for poor and destitute women who bore the brunt of the nation’s woes and were for too long neglected by the state.45 Her prophetic abilities were tested when she prophesied that a tragedy was set to happen in her family. Following this prophecy, her husband – Colonel Kawuta Dumbuya, along with high ranking army and police officers – were implicated in a coup plot, tried in obscurity and summarily executed by the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) military regime of Captain Valentine Strasser on the 29th December 1992.46 The fulfilment of this prophecy, coupled with the reported miracles of healing and deliverance that occurred at JILM, widened the sphere of her influence among ordinary Sierra Leoneans, with many claiming that she is a charismatic figure that has been raised to restore the fortunes of failed nation

that were blighted by demonic forces. Today, Evangelist Dumbuya continues to travel the world preaching a message of faith in Jesus Christ, whose power does not only heal the sick, but delivers people from ancestral curses, demonic bondages and evil spirit possession. Congregants who attend his weekly church services in Sierra Leone are greeted with a simple welcoming message, which reads ‘Expect a Miracle.’ Her contribution to Pentecostalism and promotion of the common good for ordinary citizens earned her coveted national insignias, such as The Order of the Rokel which was presented by former President Ahmed Tajan Kabbah on April 27, 2007, during celebrations marking Sierra Leone’s 46th Independence Anniversary.

African cultural and supernatural worldview
The alignment of its views about the operation of cosmic powers with traditional African cultural context contributes to African Pentecostalism’s acquiring of a place of prominence among African Christians. Because African Pentecostalism desires to break free from the vestiges of missionary Christianity which it argues did not engage effectively with lived pathologies and spiritual realities (Meyer 2004:458), Pentecostalism gave instantaneous form and meaning to existing cultural questions and provided responses that were harmonious with the religious sensibilities of African Christians (Anderson, 2014:135). However, even before this connection was made apparent by Pentecostalism, earlier African voices had called for a reassessment of Africa’s religious beliefs to identify possible convergences which will help indigenize the Christian faith in Africa. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Edward Wilmot Blyden a liberated African who had received western education at Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone where he later returned to lecture, had written: “the intercommunion between the people of the earth and those in the spiritual sphere is a cardinal belief of the African and will never be uprooted.” Much later, another Sierra Leonean theologian, Edward Fasholé-Luke made a similar point when he observes that instead of buying into the present parody

47 Leslie E. T. Shyllon, Two Centuries of Christianity in African Province of Freedom: Sierra Leone, A Case Study of European Influence and Culture on Church Development (Freetown, Sierra Leone: Reffo Printing Service, 2009), 233.
50 Allan Anderson, An Introduction to Pentecostalism, 135.
surrounding African Independent Churches (AICs), these indigenous church developments were to be regarded as conceivably helping African Christians identify possible enculturation openings for incarnating Christianity on African soil. Consequently, when Africa’s new Pentecostalism arose, it took this call seriously and engaged in theologizing that spoke of evil spirits, demons and witchcraft in ways that corroborate African culture and worldview. Pentecostalism argued that these spiritual powers and realms are to be held suspect for the occurrence of evil at various layers of society. This new Pentecostalism prides itself in its ability to mediate human wellbeing and promises prosperity, health, wealth, and power to a people who are trapped in dehumanizing misery and destitution. It claims to be able to fight and conquer evil enchantments and deliver people from the debilitating grip of demonic forces (Mitchell, 2004: 107-111). By offering what many believe are alternative spiritual discourses that resonate with African religiosity (McGrath, 2002:109), and by presenting its leaders as powerfully anointed prophets and apostles who possess power by which to control evil spirits (White, 2007: 11), African Pentecostalism seems to have succeeded where other Christian denominations have failed. Thus, the successes achieved by Pentecostalism in Africa appear to hinge on its ability to restructure traditional cosmologies where evil spirits and demonic powers are not only recognized as posing a serious hindrance to the wholesome experience of life but are exorcised by the pre-eminent power of Christ. This is only possible because “Jesus power is super power.” This creative transformation of traditional African cosmologies went on to widen the popularity of African Pentecostalism as a form of experiencing Christianity in ways that better engaged African realities (Freeman, 2012:12-13).

57 Dena Freeman, Pentecostalism and Development, 12 – 13.
Reconciling biblical and African Pentecostal supernatural worldviews

It has become clear from the preceding analysis that ever since the pneumatic revival of the Christianity arose across Africa, Pentecostalism wasted no time to point to the remarkable similarities that exists between the biblical narrative and the cultural worldviews of Africa. These similarities, particularly as it concerns issues of supernatural worldviews and spirit beings, were unfortunately ignored by earlier forms of missionary involvement in the African continent. However, whereas these similarities would indeed shed light on how supernatural phenomenon operates, African Christian theology has not provided the churches with what would be construed as biblically robust reflection that responds to issues that arise from this context. By way of a rejoinder to this impasse, the remaining section of this paper uses the spirituality that pervades African Pentecostalism to carefully engage with insights of Christ's pre-eminence derived from the ‘Christ hymn.’

First, whereas the growth of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in Sierra Leone and across Africa has been praised, this growth runs the risk of bringing non-biblical beliefs and practices into the experience of the faith and practices of church life. Even though the boisterous rise of Pentecostalism is pitched alongside the faith’s ability to address unanswered questions in ways that make sense among adherents who share a preponderance for traditional spiritual realities including cosmic powers (Anderson, 2014: 135), yet an unprecedented reappearance of primal spirituality appears to be simultaneously occurring (Cox, 1996: 83). It is tenable to argue that Pentecostalism is uncritically reviving beliefs in cosmic powers that are convergent with African culture. As suggested by the Christ-hymn, African Pentecostal churches in Sierra Leone and across Africa must be willing to confess Christ as the first-born of all creation, head over all humanity and head over the church, the new creation.

Second, the doctrine that our world is populated by evil spirits and demon beings does not appear to be based on a careful reading of the Bible. This is a surprising development because among adherents of African Pentecostalism, the Bible is considered the autoreactive Word of God and final arbiter in matters of faith and practice. However, while questions of evil spirits, demonic forces and cosmic powers are indeed recorded in a wide section of the epistles, yet the writers are always insistent on the superior power that believers have in Christ. Pentecostalism’s restructuring of traditional cosmologies must lead to the confession of Jesus’ power as the “super, super power.” As head over humanity, creation and the new creation, no other cosmic powers are comparable to the

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authority that Jesus possesses. African Pentecostalism must therefore seek to reconcile its doctrines of supernatural worldviews based on the supremacy of Christ.

Third, the push to relate the Bible to the cultures of the people who receive the gospel, convert and becomes practicing Christians must be carefully reconsidered. While contextualization does invite converts to relate the message of the gospel to their cultures, they must allow the biblical gospel – rather than the culture – to sanction cultural practices. A wholistic understanding of the gospel must determine what theological practices (no matter how sensational) the faithful are to embrace after conversion and what they must dispose. Otherwise, Pentecostal Christians in Sierra Leone and across Africa who continue to espouse doctrines that are contrary to the Bible, may run the risk of developing a form of Christianity that is biblically groundless. This will more likely result to a misunderstanding of the power that new Christian converts have in Christ.

Conclusion
The recent gains of Pentecostalism in Sierra Leone and across the African continent suggest that the faith is the most vocal Christian expression on the continent. As a faith that seeks to be aligned with marginalized people, Pentecostal exigencies are set to continue determining the shape that Africa's Christian initiatives will take for years to come. But this new dispensation must stir more responsibility among African Christians who are expected to build on those gains so that the faith they have come to possess will be genuinely grounded in biblical Christianity. To do so, the theological concerns and nature of African Christianity must be translated so that it can positively impact deep seated conceptions of the supernatural world which many believe poses a threat to their profession of faith in Christ. Pentecostalism’s successes in Africa is not only based on its espousal of spiritualities reminiscent with those shared by its African converts, but by taking this context seriously Pentecostalism is rather able to stress the remarkable similarities existing between the Bible and African culture, than earlier forms of missionary Christianity did.

Therefore, Christians in Africa (as are those elsewhere) who embrace the spiritual intuitions of Pentecostalism, can be assured that while they may be exposed to cosmic powers and beings, those powers are in complete subjugation to Christ as the “Christ hymn” has shown. Further, it behoves African Pentecostals awareness that Christ’s pre-eminence supersedes all other powers in the cosmos. It is not only through Christ that the universe was made, all
creation is in subjection to the authority of him who sustains it. This means that
the dominant spiritual narrative that perpetual battles against spirit realms and
to which humans are dangerously exposed, should be re-appropriated with solid
biblical insights. While Pentecostals have argued that to be safe in this battle, one
needs to be constantly engaged in spiritual warfare with the diabolic
constellation of evil spirits, demonic forces and witchcraft, Christians have Christ
who is both preeminent and supreme. Despite its wide appeal across large
swaths of Africa’s population, Pentecostal expressions of Christianity will be well
served if the movement endeavours to strike a conscientious balance between a
proper understanding of the Bible, its pneumatological beliefs and the African
supernatural worldview of its adherents.
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