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Addressing Urban Problems Through Kingdom Theology: The “Apostles in the Market Place” Model in Lagos, Nigeria

by Danny McCain (University of Jos, Nigeria)¹

Introduction

In January 2002, a fire started in the Ikeja Military Cantonment, located in a densely populated part of Lagos, and spread to a weapons depot located on the military base. Bombs and other munitions started exploding. For the next several hours, a deadly rain of missiles, shrapnel and flaming debris inundated neighborhoods within a four-mile radius from the army base. Over one thousand people died in the disaster, including hundreds who crowded into a canal to try to escape the conflagration. Hundreds of homes, businesses and schools were destroyed or damaged as a result of the accident.²

Afterwards, neither the military nor the local, state or federal governments could muster the resources to repair or replace all that was lost. Six and a half years later, Pastor Sam Adeyemi, pastor of the Daystar Christian Centre in Lagos, a large Pentecostal church, visited one of the public school clusters near the military base. He discovered that four of the five schools in the cluster were completely destroyed and the one left standing had lost its roof and had subsequently been stripped bare by vandals.

Pastor Adeyemi recorded the destruction and neglect on video which he showed it to his church. He told them that their church was going to replace those five schools. When his church members expressed concern about where they would get the money, Adeyemi told them that Jesus started one of his projects with five loaves and two fishes and successfully completed it. The church accepted Adeyemi's challenge and within ten months, the congregation had completed the project. They rebuilt the four schools that had been leveled and renovated the fifth one. They paved the road into the cluster of schools and planted shrubs and grass around the schools. They put desks

¹ This paper was presented by Prof. Danny McCain to the “Pentecostal Politics of Space and Power: A Global Perspective” Conference at the University of Padova, Padova, Italy on 7 June 2012. The research for this paper was conducted in conjunction with the Pentecostal and Charismatic Research Initiative, sponsored by the Center for Religion and Civic Culture (University of Southern California) and sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation. See <http://www.usc.edu/pcri>

² “Nigerians Recover Hundreds of Dead in Huge Arms Blast,” *New York Times*, January 29, 2002; <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/29/world/nigerians-recover-hundreds-of-dead-in-huge-arms-blast.html>. See also “Thousands Killed by Explosions in Nigerian Weapons Depot,” from *Associated Press* in *Fox News*, February 2, 2002. <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,44609,00.html>

in every classroom and furniture in all the staff rooms. The project cost the Daystar Christian Centre 250 million Naira (about \$1.66 million) to complete that project. Perhaps most notably, these facilities were still public schools that were completely controlled by the Lagos State Ministry of Education.³

Wale Adefarasin, pastor of the Guiding Light Assembly in Ikoyi, another Lagos-based Pentecostal church, has implemented a similar public school renovation project in Obalende, a slum area in Lagos.⁴ Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, attorney, law professor and pastor of the Olive Branch parish of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Lagos has helped create a phonics reading scheme that is being taught in workshops to primary school teachers in the public schools of Lagos. The workshops are offered at no cost to the teacher or the schools.⁵ In some of the community's most impoverished neighborhoods the Redeemed Christian Church of God is also creating private Christian schools that have the same level of professionalism as other private schools in the area but that are affordable to even the poorest families.

What motivates these congregations to renovate schools that do not belong to them and are not attended by their children? Why are they spending their own money to train public school teachers over whom they have no control after the training? More broadly, how do they articulate the rationale for undertakings that bring them no obvious or immediate benefits and that do not fit the usual model of evangelism? This paper attempts to address these questions through the use of observation, interviews with the principal players and interaction with other popular literature written by Nigerian Pentecostals.

Shifting Emphases within Nigerian Pentecostalism

Nigeria has seen several waves of Pentecostalism. The first was an indigenous movement that was primarily characterized by supernaturalism manifested through dreams and visions and also through divine healing and deliverance. Though not exhibiting all of the characteristics of modern

³ Sam Adeyemi, Interview by Danny McCain on 9 June 2011 in Lagos. Transcribed. Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent references to Sam Adeyemi come from this interview. Adeyemi also discovered most students who attended that school were poor so the church provided ten exercise books for every student in the school.

⁴ Wale Adefarasin, Interview by Danny McCain on 3 December 2011 in Lagos, Nigeria. Transcribed. Unless otherwise noted, all references to Wale Adefarasin come from this interview. In addition to renovating the school, Adefarasin decided to renovate the entire community. Therefore, his church rebuilt the health clinic in the area, provided six boreholes for the community, and installed a series of public toilets. Once a month, they send a team of workers to help the Obalende people keep the place clean and twice a month they send a medical team to the area to provide free medical clinics.

⁵ Yemi Osinbajo, Interview by Danny McCain on 28 April 2012 in Victoria Island, Lagos. Transcribed. Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent references to Yemi Osinbajo come from this interview. At the time of the interview, the church was training 120 teachers from 40 different schools.

Pentecostalism, Nigerian leaders like Joseph Babalola from southwestern Nigeria⁶ and Garrick Braide from the Niger Delta led parts of the Nigerian church back to practices that were similar to those reported in the book of Acts. In addition to stressing healing, Braide took a very radical approach toward traditional religions, destroying shrines, spiritual instruments and other symbols associated with older African religions.⁷

This indigenous movement paved the way for older Pentecostal churches like the Assemblies of God, the Foursquare Gospel Church and others to come to Nigeria and develop their form of Pentecostalism. These churches, in addition to the major emphasis on evangelism, also stressed the baptism of the Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in tongues, which had largely been missing in the earlier indigenous Pentecostal movement.

In the 1970's another wave of Pentecostalism swept through Nigeria, primarily on the campuses of the universities and other tertiary institutions. This movement was also characterized by evangelism, healing and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but also featured dynamic preaching and enthusiastic and energetic church services.⁸ In addition, it cultivated other manifestations of the Holy Spirit that were characteristic of the Charismatic movement in other parts of the world, including prophecy⁹ and other subjective forms of worship and spiritual interaction. Over the next 30 years, the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in Nigeria gradually added another major emphasis - prosperity. This was largely transported to Nigeria from abroad through Archbishop Benson Idahosa, founder of the Church of God, Mission, who had good relationships with the American charismatic movement. Some Pentecostal leaders in Nigeria believe that the prosperity message has peaked and has "morphed into the motivational gospel."¹⁰

In the early days of Nigerian Pentecostalism, in both the rural and urban sectors, Pentecostalism was largely characterized by evangelism, church planting and supernaturalism that primarily manifested in divine healing. It is now obvious from this research that many Pentecostal pastors and churches are changing their emphases. They are not abandoning evangelism and other

⁶ Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) page 41. In this book Kalu has an excellent summary of most of the significant movements of Pentecostalism in Nigeria.

⁷ G. O. M. Tasié, "The Church in the Niger Delta" in *The Nigerian Story*, ed. Ogbu Kalu (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1978) page 326.

⁸ For a good description of this university campus renewal movement, see chapter two of Matthews A. Ojo, *The End-Time Army: Charismatic Movements in Modern Nigeria* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2006)

⁹ Prophecy in a Nigerian Pentecostal context refers to those experiences when a person gives a message to others on behalf of God, normally using first person pronouns as if God himself were speaking.

¹⁰ Ladi Thompson, Interview by D. McCain in Lagos on 24 Sept. 2011. Transcribed. Unless otherwise noted, all references to Ladi Thompson come from this interview.

traditional Pentecostal practices, but they are becoming more engaged in addressing the social needs of society, a shift in priorities that in many ways overshadows the earlier emphases. This development is especially apparent in the urban areas.

Apostles in the Market Place

In 1989, a nineteen-year-old Nigerian student named Sunday Adelaja traveled to the Soviet Union to attend university. After getting his Master's degree in journalism, he moved to Kiev, Ukraine, to take a job at a television station. While there he felt impressed to start a church. After a slow start, he began working with drug addicts, prostitutes and other socially marginalized people, primarily in urban areas. Although Adelaja and his church, the Embassy of God, are controversial,¹¹ the movement is now described by *Christianity Today* as the largest evangelical church in Europe.¹²

Many things account for the church's apparent success. One of the most significant factors has been Adelaja's conviction that the church must do more than just address the spiritual needs of its members; the needs of society affect all people, he believes, including Christians as well as non-Christians. Even more important, in this view, is the idea that the unmet needs of society impede the realization of the kingdom that God wants his followers to establish on earth. This conviction has motivated Adelaja to develop ministries to orphans, currently serving and retired military personnel, politicians, musicians, businessmen and practically every other identifiable sub-sector of society. Adelaja's ultimate goal through his social ministries is national transformation, which he believes will positively impact every part of society.¹³

In 2004, Adelaja visited Lagos. He met in Sam Adeyemi's office with several Pentecostal pastors who had accepted his invitation to convene. The meeting lasted until 2:00 a.m. Most of these young pastors were already preaching and teaching a "kingdom theology" and had experimented in social engagement. Adelaja was able to provide a functional model of national transformation that they could see in operation. The pastors subsequently began to apply some of these teachings in their own churches. They continued meeting regularly and eventually formed themselves into a loose

¹¹ For a summary of some of the legal controversies that have surrounded Adelaja, see "Sunday Adelaja Marks 15 Years in Ministry Despite Controversy," *Charisma*, April 20, 2009. <http://www.charismamag.com/index.php/news-old/20424-sunday-adelaja-marks-15-years-in-ministry-in-spite-of-controversy>. For his conflicts with other evangelical Christians, see "Ukraine Evangelicals 'Dissociate' themselves from Sunday Adelaja," Religious Information Service of Ukraine, 31 December 2008. <http://old.risu.org.ua/eng/news/article%3b26698>

¹² Susan Wunderink, "Pushing Boundaries," Interview with Sunday Adelaja, *Christianity Today*, June 1, 2012, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/october/26.74.html>.

¹³ For a good overview of Adelaja's philosophy and ministry see Sunday Adelaja, *Churchshift*, (Lake Mary, Florida: Charisma House, 2008).

fellowship of pastors called “Apostles in the Marketplace,” an organization whose members are committed to personal transformation and who can “facilitate social transformation at all levels of society.”¹⁴

The organization is currently led by John Enelamah, a pastor who also works for an investment firm. A small group of these professionals have become successful pastors who share common values and use common strategies.¹⁵ The focus of this paper is on this group of pastors and the social ministries they have developed out of their churches. All of these men would fit into what Miller and Yamamori call “progressive Pentecostals”.¹⁶ The pastors in Apostles in the Market Place are now the core of a growing movement of Pentecostals in Lagos whose kingdom theology is propelling them into increasingly diverse strategies for social engagement. The following are some of the key pastors¹⁷ who make up this movement:

1. Pastor Wale Adefarasin. Pastor of Guiding Light Assembly and General Secretary of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN).¹⁸
2. Pastor Sam Adeyemi. Pastor of Daystar Christian Centre, president of the Daystar Leadership Academy, speaker on the radio and TV program “Success Power” and author of at least a dozen books and many CDs and DVDs.¹⁹
3. Dr. Tony Rapu. Physician and pastor of This Present House, Lagos.²⁰
4. Pastor John Enelamah. Pastor of World Revival Church, Chairman of Apostles in the Market Place and President/Founder of End Time Revival Ministries, Inc.²¹
5. Bishop Abraham Olaleye. Speaker on TV programme “Reviver in the Land.”²²
6. Pastor Ladi Thompson, Pastor of the Living Waters Unlimited Church, Lagos.²³

¹⁴ “Partnering to Transform Society,” Brochure produced by Apostles in the Market Place, p. 5. See also the organization’s website at <http://aimponline.org.ng/index.htm>.

¹⁵ This same group of pastors is part of a similar organization known as Church for Change. Though the two organizations overlap, Church of Change focuses more on the engagement of the Church in politics and government. These pastors meet regularly to discuss how they as individuals and their churches can impact society.

¹⁶ Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*. (2007, Los Angeles: University of California Press) p. 2.

¹⁷ This is not an exhaustive list of pastors who subscribe to this philosophy but rather a representative list.

¹⁸ For more information about Wale Adefarasin and the Guiding Light Assembly, see <http://www.guidinglightassembly.org/>.

¹⁹ For more information about Sam Adeyemi and the Daystar Christian Assembly, see <http://daystarn.org/newdaystar/>.

²⁰ For more information about Tony Rapu and This Present House, see <http://thispresenthouse.org/>.

²¹ For more information about John Enelamah and the Apostles in the Market Place, see <http://aimponline.org.ng/>.

²² For more information about Bishop Abraham Olaleye and his Abraham’s Evangelistic Ministry see <http://aem-revival.com/tv.php>.

²³ For more information about Ladi Thompson and the Living Waters Unlimited Church, see http://www.livingwatersunlimited.org/ministries_church.html.

7. Prof. Yemi Osinbajo. Pastor of the Olive Branch Parish of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Lagos, professor of law and practicing attorney.

Together they and others constitute a loose-knit group of pastors who meet periodically to discuss issues impacting their society and to strategize about the ways that their churches can address these issues. They share a common philosophy of social engagement, but have developed individual strategies for addressing social problems.

Specific Urban Ministries of Lagos Pentecostal Churches

In addition to normal church ministries such as evangelistic outreaches, teaching and discipleship, music and worship ministries, the pastors who are part of the Apostles in the Market Place have chosen to focus their efforts beyond the “four walls of the church” to the community as the primary part of their ministry. The following is a sample of their ministries.

“Area Boys”

Unemployment has created a legion of youth in Lagos known as “area boys,” who roam the streets engaging in various kinds of deviant behavior, from petty stealing and intimidation to drug abuse and armed robbery.²⁴ They are available for politicians and others to use as “thugs” to intimidate opponents. They often congregate around bus stops and markets and operate freely in Lagos’ gridlocked traffic. One of their common techniques is to extort compensation from people stuck in traffic by threatening to damage their vehicle if they do not pay compensation. Many are addicted to drugs, and some sell drugs. Some sleep on the streets.²⁵ They are a terror to the people in Lagos and an embarrassment to the Lagos State government. They illustrate the worst parts of modern African urban life.

Tony Rapu, who founded a church named This Present House in 1998, is a medical doctor in Lagos who became concerned about the area boys. While he and a team of leaders from his church were visiting Sunday Adelaja in Ukraine in 2005, the focus of their ministry crystallized. Ronke Akinola, a pastor with This Present House, said, “God told us that he has an army on the street . . . an army in drug houses . . . in the brothels . . . under the bridges; they are homeless; they are living in pits.” The mission of the church then was to “deliver them from those places and restore them and help them to find their

²⁴ For a detailed government sponsored study of area boys in Lagos, see Abubakar Momoh, “Yoruba Culture and Area Boys in Lagos” in *Identity Transformations and Identity Politics under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria*, editor: Attahiru Jega, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet and Center for Research and Development, Stockholm, 2000; http://books.google.com.ng/books?hl=en&lr=&id=fUWLQv8-H70C&oi=fnd&pg=PA181&ots=zhNpk8QOvV&sig=m1Dzk_yei9zJZnMtrC_rkiBQ7YU&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

²⁵ “Area Boys: A Growing Menace on the Streets of Lagos,” News from Africa, Koinonia Community, http://www.newsfromafrica.org/newsfromafrica/articles/art_10372.html.

destiny in God.”²⁶ After clarifying this direction the team returned to Lagos and immediately began working with street people, especially the area boys.

The church had some early successes. It started reaching out to the poor, criminals, commercial sex workers, drug barons and others characterized by anti-social behavior. Rapu said that he soon discovered that these new converts did not mix well with his church in Lekki, which was filled with professionals.²⁷ So he created a church in another part of Lagos called God Bless Nigeria Church. This growing church is currently meeting in a converted warehouse in the industrial zone of Oshodi. The primary focus of this branch church is to reach those in the various parts of Lagos who are social miscreants. They have developed the following strategies for outreach:

1. The church sends out teams in the middle of the week to make contact with people and prepare them for a Sunday visit.
2. About ten of these teams go out at 7:00 a.m. every Sunday with vans to meet these people and bring them to the God Bless Nigeria Church. An average of about 50 new people come to the church each week through this outreach.
3. When they arrive at the church they go through a “re-imaging” program. Many of these invitees look “rough,” so they are given a haircut, a shower and new clothes.
4. They then fill out personal and employment details with a department that works to find jobs for them.
5. They are then taken to a loud, boisterous church service that includes an hour of body-shaking music, practical exhortations, testimonials of changed lives, powerful preaching and an invitation to receive Christ as their personal savior. The majority of the first-time attendees usually respond positively to the invitation.²⁸
6. The following week, the same people are picked up again and enrolled in classes at the church that last about two hours before the church service begins. They pass through a curriculum that takes about nine months to complete. The training focuses on personal discipleship as well as the development of skills that will help participants succeed in life.

Church leaders report between 30 and 40 percent of those who attend God Bless Nigeria Church the first day continue with the program and become responsible citizens.²⁹ Many become members of God Bless Nigeria Church but others return to churches they have been affiliated with in the past. The leaders of this church also describe remarkable changes in some of the communities where they work. For example, in a community in the Lagos area called Empire, Lemuel George, one of the volunteer pastors, told me that the

²⁶ Ronke Akinola, Interview by Danny McCain on 28 April 2012 in Lagos. Transcribed. Unless otherwise noted, all references to Ronke Akinola come from this interview.

²⁷ Tony Rapu, Interview by Danny McCain on 9 June 2011 in Lagos. Transcribed. Unless otherwise noted, all references to Tony Rapu come from this interview.

²⁸ I witnessed this process on Sunday, 30 April 2012. I saw the haircuts being given, employment applications being filled, the training sessions being conducted, and the service and invitation given at the end.

²⁹ Akinola Interview.

neighborhood used to be filled with drug addicts and prostitutes. People were leaving the area because it was so dangerous. However, he said, "We went in there and began to engage the people," which led to a major reduction in the prevalence of social vices. He explained, "We are not just about people. We want to see change in the community."³⁰

And, according to him, the community itself slowly began to change. The area boys stopped their stealing and fighting. The government even responded positively. They began to arrest persistent drug dealers and clean up the streets so the community appeared cleaner and safer and the people could "see they have a future." The rental value of property went back up and now businessmen are actually competing to get back into Empire.

Commercial Sex Workers

In addition to working with area boys, God Bless Nigeria Church included outreach to commercial sex workers in Lagos as part of its original vision. Using a strategy similar to the one described above, God Bless Nigeria staff members go to the streets and bring the young women to the church. The church established a 42-bed residential house called Genesis House to help them stay away from the sex markets. In some cases, the church helps these former sex workers to pay off the pimps who managed them and even the hotels where they had rented rooms. The recovering prostitutes go through mentoring and skills acquisition courses. Pastor Akinola reports that about 40 percent of the women who pass through the program avoid prostitution on a long-term basis. Some have gotten married. Others have developed skills to pursue hair dressing, catering, tailoring and other legitimate professions.

Poverty Alleviation

Lagos is a city of extremes. Some of the richest people in Africa live on the islands of Ikoyi, Lekki and Victoria Island. On the mainland, however, where the masses live, is some of the worst poverty in Africa. How to bridge this gap? That is the quest several Pentecostal pastors are attempting to fulfill.

In 1990, Sam Adeyemi, then a young unemployed university graduate, was feeling the pinch of Nigeria's economic hardship. One evening, while reading the story of God's promise to bless Abraham, he said that something burned within him as if God was making him that same promise. He testified:

That moment, I became a new person. The limits were taken off my mind. Nothing could stop me since God's resources were now available to me. My excuses for not making progress died. I began to tell people that I can never be poor again . . . My self-image changed. And that literally changed my life.³¹

³⁰ Lemuel George, Interview by Danny McCain, 30 May 2012 in Lagos. Transcribed. Unless otherwise noted, all references to Lemuel George come from this interview.

³¹ Sam Adeyemi, *We Are the Government*, (Lagos: Pneuma Publishing, Ltd., 2010) p. 8

Sam Adeyemi later started a church as a base to reach out to those who were unemployed and under-employed. His primary method of addressing poverty is through teaching. He has started an academy that teaches principles of financial success and prepares people to go into the marketplace with new skills and a sense of direction. He also has a radio program in Nigeria, Liberia and the Gambia called “Success Power” that teaches financial principles of success. His TV program is broadcast in Nigeria and the UK.³² His stated objective is “to raise and sustain the morale, strength and capability of the human spirit in an economic and social environment.”³³ He says that the purpose of these teachings is to enable everyone to develop and utilize the gifts and talents that are within them, which will also help to transform society.

God Bless Nigeria Church created a poverty alleviation program through its King Solomon Micro-Finance Bank, which makes loans available to people who would not be able to get them from regular banks. In addition, the church has an “empowerment unit” which helps train the unemployed to write CVs and sharpen their job applications. They monitor job seekers and newly employed people to make sure they continue to implement what they have learned. In addition, once they are employed, they are encouraged not simply to pay back their loans but to save money as well. Pastor Akinola reports that this project is succeeding very well.

Health Issues

Perhaps the ultimate consequence of poverty is poor health that leads to premature death. The early missionaries who brought Christianity to Africa also brought clinics, hospitals and other health services. Pentecostals are continuing these traditions³⁴ as well as breaking new ground. Pastor Wale Adefarasin and his church, Guiding Light Assembly, embarked on a five-point strategy to improve the community of Obalende. One of those strategies was the renovation of the local government-owned clinic. The congregation remodeled the building, brought in new equipment and even supplemented the salaries of the clinic workers. In addition, every two weeks, the church sends a team of health experts to provide free medical care to the sick and injured. When a patient needs to be referred to a hospital, the church picks up the bill if the patient cannot afford it.

Prof. Osinbajo told me about the health scheme his church has embarked on to utilize modern Western strategies to address age-old tropical diseases. Osinbajo’s own denominational province has created a medical insurance

³² For the location and schedule of Sam Adeyemi’s radio and TV broadcasts, see http://www.successpower.tv/index.php?main_page=page&id=3

³³ See Success Unlimited Website “About Us” section:

http://www.successpower.tv/index.php?main_page=page&id=1

³⁴ Several other pastors and churches in Lagos sponsor free clinics. For example, Bishop Abraham Olaleye conducts a monthly clinic in his community staffed by volunteer medical personnel in his church.

program for children, from birth to five years old. This program is connected to a local health maintenance organization (HMO) in each community. For 5000 Naira (about \$32) per year, a child's parents or guardian can enroll him or her in the program. When the child is sick with routine health problems, the HMO provides care without additional payment. As of May 2012, 250 children in Obalende and 125 in Eleko were enrolled. Interestingly, this service is not provided to members of Osinbajo's church nor does the church determine which children are covered by the insurance. The insurance company, which is not connected to the church, selects the recipients based on the principle that the assistance should be provided to the poorest children in the area, including both Christians and Muslims.

These examples demonstrate that these Pentecostal pastors and their Pentecostal churches are on the cutting edge of addressing urban problems in the city of Lagos. According to those who are providing them, these services are not intended as evangelism or as attempts to win the favor of political officials. They are provided simply because the pastors and their congregations are part of a broken world that, in the words of Tony Rapu, needs to be fixed to "make life better for humanity."³⁵

Factors Influencing the Shifting Emphases of the Lagos Pentecostalism

Why are Pentecostals shifting their focus toward social problems? While many factors account for this development, I will here mention three that seem most salient.

A Reduction of Emphasis on the Second Coming of Christ

Early Pentecostalism was characterized by enthusiastic preaching about the imminent second coming of Christ. Along with this, there was a strong emphasis on the afterlife as the solution to all the problems of the world. Therefore, the Christian believers were encouraged to endure the problems of society with patience and sacrifice. Jesus, however, has not returned to the earth, which has resulted in what Kent Duncan calls a "declining intensity of expectation."³⁶ Gary Maxey, a current resident of Lagos and a 30-year missionary educator in Nigeria, confirms that there has definitely been "a decrease of the expectation of the second coming of Christ" during the last 20

³⁵ Rapu's complete statement was: "You see a broken world and you have a desire to put it right. That's it. It is just that simple. You can meet the need. You feel you have the strategies. You feel you have what it takes. You have the solution. You can put things together to make life better for humanity."

³⁶ Kent Duncan, "Emerging Engagement: The Growing Social Conscience of Pentecostalism," *Enrichment Journal*, Springfield, MO, USA 2012. http://enrichmentjournal.org/201201/201201_EJO_Emerg_Engag.cfm. I am indebted to Duncan for the first and third of these observations. He actually adds another reason for this evolving emphasis which is the "transformation of Pentecostal publications." He points out that Pentecostal publications are being influenced by the secular publications that are stressing social needs and they, in turn, are influencing their Pentecostal readers.

to 30 years.³⁷ The fact that Jesus has not returned to earth has encouraged more recent generations of Pentecostals to devote their energies to making life safer, healthier and more just today rather than waiting to experience these social blessings in the afterlife. Osinbajo asked, “Yes, the time will come when you will go to heaven but while we are here, what sort of life will you be able to live? What kind of impact will you make while you are here?”

The Failure of Government to Address Urban Problems

Nigeria has many social problems, and the government apparently lacks the resources, strategies or will to solve them.³⁸ The most common popular response to this situation is to complain. Certain Pentecostal pastors, however, have decided to do something constructive. Sam Adeyemi has paved public roads as a service to the community because the government could not or would not pave them. The fact that fees at public health clinics prevented parents from getting medical care for their children motivated Osinbajo to create the children’s health insurance program. The failure of government to maintain schools has prompted several pastors to renovate public schools themselves. Although the people are already being taxed to provide these services, the pastors of Apostles in the Market Place view the provision of these resources to the community as important enough to “tax” themselves again. In other words, they and their congregations have decided to provide these essential social services rather than allow the problems to fester and further destabilize their society.

The Positive Influence of Social and Cultural Pressures

The proliferation of media has made most people more aware of the social privation and injustices that exist in various parts of the world. Consequently, many governments are directing more resources toward poverty alleviation, education and economic opportunity. The fact that these issues are being more widely addressed has encouraged pastors and church leaders to look at these problems through the lens of Christian responsibility. Duncan says, “Pentecostal believers are not immune to these media influences and cultural priorities.”³⁹

³⁷ Gary Maxey, Interview by Danny McCain on 2 May 2011 in Ikoyi, Lagos. Unless otherwise noted, all references to Gary Maxey come from this interview.

³⁸ The following are a sample of recent media headlines about Nigeria’s problems: “Violence Compounds Problems In Nigeria,” “The Challenges of Environmental Problems in Nigeria,” “Current Problems of Educational Development in Nigeria,” “Addressing Nigeria’s Economic Problems and the Islamist Terrorist Threat,” “The Poverty Problem: Will Nigeria Ever Get It Right?,” “Food Security and Marketing Problems in Nigeria,” “Something Is Wrong With Nigeria - Jonathan Says: ‘I’m Not The Problem’,” “Using Social Housing Scheme to Solve Housing Problems in Nigeria,” “Nigeria: New Government; Old Problems.”

³⁹ Duncan, “Emerging Engagement: The Growing Social Conscience ... “ no page.

An exception to the general tendency of Nigerian government officials to neglect social problems is the current governor of Lagos State, Babatunde Fashola. He has engaged in a massive plan to upgrade Lagos by hiring street cleaners, planting trees, addressing traffic problems and fighting crime.⁴⁰ Though Fashola is a Muslim, it could be argued that churches have spurred his efforts to some extent. It is more likely that the churches and the Lagos State government mutually encourage one other to address urban problems.⁴¹

Motivations Influencing the Shifting Emphases Among Pentecostals

What motivates individual Pentecostals to get involved in solving urban problems? My interaction with Pentecostal leaders revealed several factors.

Love of God

When I asked Pentecostals why they were engaged in social activism, the most common response was some variation of “love for God.” A typical example is John Enelamah, “I think the starting point is my love for God. The more I know him, the more I realize that Jesus would be involved in these challenges in people’s lives.”⁴² Prof. Yemi Osinbajo said something similar:

The major thing is that there is no other way of expressing the love of Jesus Christ . . . to show the poor who have no hope that there is hope. What is the point of your being a Christian? What is the purpose of it? It is the love of Jesus they need the most.

The experience of a changed life that has resulted in personal fulfillment, meaningful relationships, positive worship experiences and a life free from guilt and remorse encourages the Pentecostal faithful to express love in practical ways. This expression of love is intended to reflect and glorify God, whom they view as the source of the positive things in their lives. Pentecostals often quote Jesus’ statement in Matthew 25:40: “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”

⁴⁰ The following are some recent newspaper headlines trumpeting Fashola’s success in cleaning up Lagos: “Lagos’ youngest governor transforms the megacity,” “Fashola Leads Fresh Drive To Restore Law, Order In Lagos,” “Fashola: Turning the Lagos dream to reality,” “Hurricane Fashola visits Apapa, demolishes illegal structures,” “Fashola Implores Nigerians To Embrace Tree Planting As A Way Of Life” “Fashola advises Lagos residents on proper waste disposal.”

⁴¹ Though Fashola won his reelection with about 80 percent of the vote, he has critics who claim that he is making Lagos a better place for the rich at the expense of the poor and is not as “clean” as most people believe. A typical example is the website Elombah.com in which Gbenga Thomas writes an article entitled “The Other Face of Lagos - Land Scams in Lagos Involving Gov. Fashola and Ex-Gov. Tinubu.” http://elombah.com/index.php/templates/ja_purity/media/system/js/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3772%3Athe-other-face-of-lagos-land-scams-in-lagos-involving-gov-fashola-and-ex-gov-tinubu&catid=48%3Acorruption-reports&Itemid=92

⁴² John Enelamah, Interview by D. McCain on 30 April 2012 in Victoria Island, Lagos. Unless otherwise noted, all references to John Enelamah come from this interview.

Divine Calling

The personal relationship with God that Pentecostals believe in so strongly often generates within them what they refer to as a “call” from God. It is a subjective spiritual experience in which individuals believe they are directed to fulfill a certain role, complete a certain task or engage in a certain profession. Sam Adeyemi’s story quoted above illustrates this point. He was motivated by a subjective experience he had while meditating on the Bible. John Enelamah reports a similar impetus:

I have been very deeply motivated because of a sense of this divine calling . . . I am hungry to see the movement of God in society and I feel that sense of calling and I have come to accept those things as my responsibilities. I enjoy it. I see the impact. I see the results. And I am more encouraged.

Sense of Fulfillment

The calling referred to above tends to happen on the front-end of social engagement, while fulfillment is a motivation after the one called has already become engaged. Pastor Lemuel George, one of the volunteer pastors of the God Bless Nigeria Church, testifies, “I would say that I find joy and satisfaction in doing this. I just feel like this is what I am supposed to be doing . . . So actually going out to the streets and facing these guys and ministering to them is really rewarding.” Pastor Ronke Akinnola described her motivation this way:

I can actually be of help. I can actually be an instrument of deliverance to help somebody locate his destiny in God. So that was empowering for me and humbling and quite fulfilling. I was able to restore people to normality. Some have gone back to school. Some have gone back to their families. Some have upgraded their lifestyles. When they come to church you cannot see any difference in them and others.

Maslow’s hierarchy ranks “self-actualization” as a human being’s highest possible level of development or fulfillment. Some Pentecostals engaged in solving urban problems appear to have experienced that developmental peak.

Social Implications

Still, many Pentecostals have a pessimistic view of life. They believe that the world has drifted far from God and is drifting farther every day. For example, Pastor Enelamah expressed serious concern about what will happen to the society if Christians do not act.

I have a growing understanding of the negative impact of limiting God to the four walls of the church . . . If you limit God to the four walls, it means that 99 percent of the body of Christ will not be able to discover their own destiny . . .

The positive side of this point is simply the desire to improve society - to restore things to the way they should be. Tony Rapu said:

I am just sort of inspired to do what I do. You see something wrong and you have a desire to put it right. That’s it. It is just that simple. You can meet the need. You feel you have the strategies. You feel you

have what it takes. You have the solution. You can put things together to make life better for humanity.

The Influence of Kingdom Theology on Social Engagement

The motivations described above are all grounded in a particular understanding of God, his word and the nature of the world he has created. These beliefs help generate the ultimate motivation of Pentecostals - a kingdom theology that encourages believers to move outside of the four walls of their churches and try to solve the problems of society. Kingdom theology is not something new, but it has received renewed emphasis within Pentecostalism over the last two decades.

Kingdom theology teaches that God created the world based on eternal principles. These principles are analogous to scientific tenets such as the law of gravity or the limit of motion to the speed of light. These laws are so consistent that life is based on them, and success is achieved through submitting to and utilizing them. Sunday Adelaja believes that the perfect reflection of God's laws for this earth are found in Genesis 1 and 2, which present a picture of the earth before it was thrown into confusion, chaos and misery because of sin. Therefore, if God's kingdom is to be restored to the earth, it will mean God's human co-regents must re-discover and implement the principles that were functioning at that time.⁴³

Throughout Western history, the Christian church has primarily focused on God's spiritual laws, such as principles associated with sin, confession, forgiveness, worship, prayer, and the supernatural. Christians have believed that to the extent one understands and implements these spiritual laws, to that extent one understands God, develops a meaningful relationship with him and experiences contentment and fulfillment in the spiritual part of life.

Those who promote kingdom theology stress that God has also created laws that govern social life, including laws associated with relationships, education, health, reproduction, governance, income generation, work, justice, entertainment and other spheres of society.⁴⁴ These are all reflections of God's kingdom laws which, when properly observed, enable those spheres of society to function most efficiently. Unfortunately, human misconduct has eroded many of these kingdom laws, thus weakening society at large. The more one discovers those eternal kingdom laws and the closer one adheres to these laws, the more meaning and fulfillment one will have in life and the more God's kingdom will be manifested and implemented in those particular areas

⁴³ Sunday Adelaja, Interview by Danny McCain on 7 November 2012 in Irpen, Ukraine.

⁴⁴ Many Pentecostal leaders, including Sunday Adelaja and Wale Adefarasin utilize the "Seven Mountains" imagery to refer to the seven important spheres of society that must be positively influenced by the Church. These include: Arts and Entertainment, Business, Education, Family, Government, Media and Religion. These seven are packaged many different ways by many different people. For a sample, see the "Reclaiming the 7 Mountains of Culture" website: <http://www.reclaim7mountains.com/>.

of life. God is not just interested in seeing his spiritual laws implemented in the fellowship of his followers. Rather, God is interested in seeing all of his principles implemented everywhere on earth, and to the extent to which that is done, God's kingdom rules. Anigbogu says that just as France and Britain wanted to colonize territories, "God wants to 'colonize' the earth to bring the heavenly culture – the Kingdom ways – to the earth."⁴⁵

Thus, according to Apostles in the Market Place pastors, the followers of Jesus must not only focus on learning and implementing God's spiritual laws but also on learning and implementing God's kingdom laws, which govern society. To do so on a personal basis will produce physical health, a developed mind, meaningful relationships and financial prosperity. When those principles are implemented in a in society as a whole, they will produce security, social harmony, sound infrastructure, efficient use of natural resources, political stability and equal opportunities for all. Understanding and implementing all of God's laws thus means establishing God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.⁴⁶

Specifically, the kingdom of God refers to the rule of God on earth. Jesus came to the earth not simply to restore the relationship between humanity and God but also to help restore the planet to its condition before the fall. What does that look like now? Osinbajo says the kingdom is "a way of life that Jesus Christ brought about." Adefarasin says, "The kingdom is wherever God rules - wherever God is king." Since humans are God's official representatives on earth, it is their responsibility to restore the planet to its original state.

How is this restoration to take place? The primary means is to identify God's "kingdom principles" and then to re-establish them in all sectors of the society. For example, there are principles related to health. The more one understands and implements these, the better health one will enjoy. There are principles related to income generation. The more one puts these into practice, the more wealth he or she will generate. There are principles related to governance. The more these are implemented, the healthier and more

⁴⁵ Vincent Anigbogu, Private Correspondence on 24 April 2012. Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent references to Vincent Anigbogu come from this correspondence. Anigbogu bases this belief on Psalm 82:8 and Isaiah 11:9. He adds these further parallels: "Just as every earthly kingdom has its language, ways of conduct, and system of government, similarly, God has His language, culture, and system of government and administration which the Bible calls His righteousness (Matt 6:33). Just as colonial masters, in order to make the acculturation process easier, started schools to teach the language, culture, and ways of the colonial masters, so did God start a school with the fathers (Abraham, Moses, etc) and the prophets, and finally with Jesus and the Church (Hebrews 1:1-2), to make the coming or manifestation of His Kingdom easier. A wonderful textbook came out of it called the Bible."

⁴⁶ Prof. Anigbogu believes that the best place to understand the theology of the kingdom in the Bible is in the Lord's Prayer which says, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10 KJV).

functional the government will be. Therefore, discovering and implementing God's kingdom principles, for these Pentecostal leaders, is the best way to address urban social problems.

Implications of Kingdom Theology for Pentecostalism in Lagos

How has kingdom theology influenced Pentecostalism? Specifically, how has it affected their engagement in the urban problems in Lagos?

1. There is a shifting emphasis from inward focus to outward focus.

One of the most obvious developments in the Apostles in the Market Place version of Pentecostalism is the shift from a ministry that primarily focuses on what happens inside a church building to one that focuses on what happens outside of the church building. Wale Adefarasin says, "Kingdom theology is really about taking the kingdom of God into the community and not waiting for the community to come into the church." He believes, for example, that rather than trying to convince the world in general to listen to Christian music, kingdom-minded Christians should penetrate the contemporary music industry and use the music medium to teach kingdom principles. He adds, "The church is not about building walls anymore but building bridges, bridges to one another and buildings to our communities." He describes this as a "kingdom-centered church" rather than an "empire-building church."

Adeyemi describes the consequences of the earlier, more inward-looking focus of Pentecostalism. "We saw something in Nigeria. The church stayed within its four walls. It was preaching its own message in there. And then the devil overran the political system." He adds, "It looks like we will be limited in our attempts to evangelize and influence the society if we do not get involved in the structures of the society."

This movement is making a serious challenge to secularism. Tony Rapu believes that to serve as a lawyer or physician or even a factory worker is as sacred as serving as a pastor because it is the whole world that must submit to the kingship of Christ. He says that the house-wife or the architect or the male nurse - all are ministers. Enelamah says,

I don't want a doctor to leave the medical profession to aspire to be ordained as a local church pastor. Because if you emphasize that, they (the church) will think that the highest thing about the Christian faith is to be ordained a pastor. That doctor will influence more lives than the man serving in the church because every day he interacts with so many people.

Obviously, this has serious implications for solving urban problems. If providing social services is on an equal footing with evangelism and church planting, this provides the motivation and gives the theological support the church needs to engage society.

2. There is an expanding emphasis on the physical, not just the spiritual.

If the new wave of Pentecostal leaders are focusing more outside the church, then they are focusing on physical and emotional and infrastructure

needs of society in addition to spiritual needs. Adefarasin says, “The church has more responsibility than just for the spiritual life of their members.” Osinbajo agrees that there has been a shift from the old Pentecostal emphasis to an emphasis on greater engagement in society.

If you look at a lot of Pentecostal churches and how they have evolved, there has been a lot of attention on evangelism and church-planting and building the church itself and bringing more and more people to a knowledge of Jesus Christ. But I think in the past decade there has been more emphasis on impacting society, impacting education, impacting medicine and making more of an impact.

Osinbajo adds that the mandate of Christianity is to teach about the “transforming power of Jesus Christ” in all aspects of life. It is “being able to influence education, influence entertainment, and influence business . . . We are supposed to be able to influence all of these pillars of society and disciple different segments of society.” Such a philosophy opens wide the doors of Pentecostal churches and allows the members to invest the same energy into solving the social problems in this life that Pentecostals have invested in the past to secure converts a place in the life to come.

3. There is a changing emphasis from supernatural laws to natural laws.

One of the fundamental features of Pentecostalism from Azusa Street onwards is a strong belief in and practice of the supernatural. However, the emphasis on discovering and implementing God’s natural laws has tended to reduce the emphasis on the supernatural. Anigbogu says that life is 98 percent principles and two percent miracles.⁴⁷ The attorney Osinbajo states, “I think that the right emphasis is not on the supernatural but the natural laws. And the reason being is that hard work and integrity and trustworthiness and vision - all of these things are the natural laws of God.” He also states:

We have 300 women dying daily from maternal childbirth-related problems in Nigeria. It is clear to me that does not need to happen. We do not need supernatural intervention. We need to follow God’s laws of sanitation, nutrition and fighting corruption . . . I do not think you need 24 hours of prayer to be able to get those things done. If you are to follow the right principles, you can cut the deaths to a minimum.

Pastor Ronke Akinnola agrees:

One thing about Pentecostalism is that the place of miracles has been overemphasized and has created a generation of lazy Christians who just wait for God to do things for them, like a magician. Because they are always waiting for miracles, they refused to learn the principles and pathways of God. We teach the principles of wealth creation,

⁴⁷ Akinnola uses the same 98% to 2% language, suggesting that this originally came from Sunday Adelaja. It should be noted that these figures are not intended to be a statistic based upon empirical research but rather a generalized statement offering a corrective to the overemphasis on the supernatural within Pentecostalism.

principles of sowing and reaping, principles of understanding of life itself, principles of love and fellowship and relationship. We do not say, 'Oh, I will pray for you. You will be rich overnight.' No, we teach productivity. We teach labor. We teach integrity. We teach honesty, truthfulness and love.

She also complains that many of the other Pentecostal churches "cringe" from working with the physically handicapped like the hearing impaired for instance. She says that they believe "we must be powerful; we must heal them." To have a handicapped person in the church would be an admission of the limitation of their access to supernatural power. However, Akinola says. "We see it differently . . . We help get them accommodation because landlords do not want to rent houses to them. We help them to acquire skills. We help them to become normal people rather than focusing on the miracle."

Anigbogu provides a theological basis for this shifting emphasis. He uses the statement "give us this day our daily bread" in the Lord's Prayer to illustrate the balance. He explains that God used two ways of providing bread in the Bible. While Israel was in the wilderness, God provided supernatural manna. Jesus also provided fish and bread supernaturally on one occasion. However, by far the greatest amount of bread was supplied in the Bible through God providing seeds and also giving people energy to work and produce grain. They then could use that grain, their cooking skills and energy to make bread.

All of the Pentecostal leaders I interviewed agreed that God still performs miracles today. However, by stressing natural laws, there is clearly a decrease in emphasis on the miraculous. Does this decrease mean these leaders have departed from Pentecostalism? Tony Rapu says that sometimes he considers himself "post-Pentecostal" while Bishop Olaleye says that the traditional Pentecostal movement may be over.⁴⁸ I would not go so far as to say this Nigerian movement has become post-Pentecostal, but it has certainly evolved into something that was not envisioned by the Nigerian Pentecostal fathers.

This new emphasis may have been seeded to some extent by Western influences among Pentecostal leaders. Many of these pastors have studied abroad, and all of them have traveled widely. They have access to 24-hour international news and have Facebook and Twitter accounts. Gary Maxey also suggests that the "upward social mobility within Pentecostal churches" is also having an effect on their thinking and ministry. "As you get increasing numbers of more advanced, sophisticated people, I think there has tended to be a lessening focus on personal evangelism and also, related to this, a focus on

⁴⁸ Abraham Olaleye Interview by Danny McCain on 24 September 2011. Unless otherwise noted, all references to Olaleye come from this interview. Olaleye has a rather pessimistic view of much of modern Pentecostalism. He uses the illustration of a ceiling fan to illustrate the end of the contemporary Nigerian version of Pentecostalism. After the power goes off a fan turns for a while but its life and influence are really over.

reaching out to the social needs around them.” One certainly cannot ignore the impact of globalization in the shaping of modern Pentecostal ideas.

Impact of Kingdom Theology and Strategy on Lagos Urban Problems

What is the result of this evolving Pentecostal theology and emphasis? How does it address social problems in the Lagos urban communities?

1. Kingdom theology provides the Pentecostal community with the theological foundation and the motivation to address urban problems.

As illustrated earlier, Pentecostal kingdom theology - which views the whole world as God’s domain and Christian believers as his co-regents in this world - provides the moral mandate and motivation that enable Pentecostal churches to address urban social problems. Their loyalty to God demands such engagement. Moreover, their understanding of the Christian faith upends the idea that it is only the pastor, the missionary and other “full-time Christian workers” who are doing the work of God. All are called to ministry through social engagement. Seeing the needy in society as if they were Christ himself is a powerful incentive to help solve the social needs around them.

2. The proximity of urban Pentecostal churches to urban problems makes church involvement more likely.

All of the churches that follow the “Apostles in the Market Place” strategy are urban churches. Most are in Victoria Island, Lekki and Ikoyi, which are relatively isolated from the slums of Lagos. However, most of the church members have regular exposure to needy people in the areas, thus continually reminding them of these deep human needs. Addressing urban suffering is not like supporting foreign missionaries, which can be done from a distance. Urban problems are always there for city dwellers to see. Their assistance can be direct and immediate, and supervision is easier because of this proximity.

3. The Pentecostal church organizations have the infrastructure and manpower to address social urban problems.

Governments tend to be bureaucratic and thus slow in addressing problems, to say nothing of the corruption that often drains away resources from their intended recipients and projects. However, the Pentecostal urban churches that have been examined in this paper have more efficient administrative teams and better functioning infrastructure resources that can be mobilized to tackle urban problems. In addition, volunteers usually have a much higher motivation to address these problems because they feel called to the work, not just for a salary, but as an expression of faith. For example, Pastor Lemuel George has a personal business that provides him with his necessary income while requiring little of his time. Therefore, he serves as a full-time pastor of the God Bless Nigeria Church, which requires him to spend a large portion of his time with Lagos area boys, prostitutes and other socially marginalized people who are neglected by most civil servants.

4. The example of the Church solving urban problems provides motivation to government to create similar projects.

When non-governmental organizations undertake responsibilities that are traditionally associated with government, government agencies are often motivated to step up and do more. George says, "Wherever God Bless Nigeria goes, after a while, you find the authorities, the government began to come in and began to clean up the place . . . They come in and arrest people who are into drugs and they began to clear out those shacks so the places physically began to get cleaner." Even people in government will respond to good leadership, even if it is voluntary.

5. The relationships and the credibility gained by urban ministry help Pentecostal leaders influence government policy related to urban issues.

Government is made up of many reasonable people who are looking for solutions to urban problems. Unfortunately, they get so bogged down with bureaucratic responsibilities that they often have little opportunity to develop solutions to the problems they are responsible for solving. However, when churches show them ways to solve problems, they are often willing to use their resources to address the same or similar problems. For example, the children's insurance program that was developed by the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Lagos has prompted the local government to consider developing a similar insurance scheme. In arguing this point, Wale Adefarasin reported to me that Sunday Adelaja was able to use the credibility and political clout he had gained in Ukraine to get legislation passed prohibiting violence and sexually explicit material on public TV before 9 PM. Adefarasin himself is trying to use the credibility he has gained to advise government publicly on issues such as Islamic banking⁴⁹ and fuel subsidy removal.⁵⁰

Conclusion

This paper shows that several Pentecostal pastors in Lagos are seriously addressing social problems and that they are primarily motivated by their understanding of kingdom theology. The observations, interviews and literature this group produced successfully made that case. More research is needed to determine to what extent this model of social engagement is influencing mainstream Pentecostal groups, whether or not Pentecostals are equally engaged in solving rural problems and how Pentecostal engagement in society compares to that of mainline churches in Nigeria. It is clear that the government and people of Lagos have seen some urban problems mitigated by these pastors and churches, and they have seen and been challenged by a positive faith-based model of selfless social engagement.

⁴⁹ Sina Fadare, "Don't politicize Islamic banking - Adefarasin warns," *National Mirror*, 14 August 2011, <http://nationalmirroronline.net/religion/religion-news/18482.html>

⁵⁰ Nairaland Forum headline, Oct 28, 2011, "Wale Adefarasin (PFN) Backs FG On Fuel Subsidy Removal," <http://www.nairaland.com/791421/wale-adefarasin-pfn-backs-fg>