



## Engaging the Efficacy of Nigerian Popular Gospel Music and Pentecostalism for Nigerian Church Growth

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**Abstract.** In the 1970s and 1980s there was the emergence of Pentecostalism that gave rise to the establishment of many Churches in Nigeria. Among the churches that were established are ; Deeper Life Bible Church, New Living Faith Church also known as Winners Chapel, The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Gospel Faith Mission and many others. The rate at which other churches are springing up and the founding of many other branches is alarming till date. The Proliferation of churches led to the existence of churches everywhere in Nigerian society. However, the numeric increase or proliferation of Churches in Nigeria is not attributed only to the mode of worship, prayers and to signs and miracles introduced to Churches through Pentecostalism but also influenced by music. The value of music should never be lost sight of in worship. The relationship between music and Pentecostalism cannot be undermined as music cannot be separated from worship. This paper examines the efficacy of contributions of music in genre, form and performance practice in Church growth, specifically in Nigeria. This research reviewed the history and explosion of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. The materials used in this research were sourced from books, journals, magazines and Internet. Historical research design was used for this study. This paper concludes that the mystic effect and intrinsic value of music affects church growth and should be considered as a viable tool together with Pentecostalism for Church growth in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Efficacy, Music, Pentecostalism, Church Growth

### 1. The History of Pentecostalism in Nigeria

There emerge different churches in the 1970s upward as a result of strained relationship between the youth and the early churches known as orthodox churches such as the Methodist mission at Badagry and the African Church. The Youth were not pleased with the lukewarm attitude to evangelism and the stereotyped

method of conducting church services. The revival of culture and the exposure of many youths to education in Britain and America brought changes to the old order of Christianity they were introduced to by their parents or which they inherited. The establishment of more secondary schools and Universities after the Nigerian civil war exposed the youth to many youthful activities. The church was not left out as sectarian evangelical groups emerged as a result of the important roles youths were playing in all spheres of national life.

According to Dada (2004), “Neo –Pentecostalism found its way in Nigeria in the mid-sixties through the activities of some American faith healer and Televangelists like Kenneth Hagin, Oral Roberts, Kenneth Copland, John Avazin T.L. Osborn and others and they laid special emphasis on a direct and personal experience with God through the baptism of the holy spirit”. The “1970s also witnessed the greatest influx of American Christian literatures into the country”.

These literatures came from American evangelists such as T.L. Osborn, Oral Roberts, Billy Graham, Kenneth Hagin, Gordon Lindsay, Morris Cerullo ,Reinhard Bonnke who was distributing the Holy Bible freely to people and many others. Some of the above named evangelists visited Nigeria and conducted crusades, while some sent their tracts and booklets freely to the country. For example in 1973, Reggy Thomas of the Revival Fires and T.L. Osborn conducted crusades at Ibadan, while Brothers Argemiro of the Free Gospel Mission conducted revival in Lagos. “The year came to an end with a powerful crusade conducted by Morris Cerullo on December 15<sup>th</sup> 1973 at Ibadan .A prominent feature of these crusades which gave rise to the emergence of separatist evangelical Christian groups, were instances of the divine healing, the baptism of the Holy Spirit and other Pentecostal manifestations, which appealed mostly to the youths that formed the

majority of the population of the crowd gathering at these crusades. The revivals and crusades were the avenues by which Pentecostalism was introduced into the country. The resultant effect of the crusades and revivals was the spirit of protests from the youths in the established churches in which they complained that their parents' churches were not spiritual enough. New churches thus spring up here and there with different purposes. Among the churches that were established on the basis of the explanation made above, include: The Redeem Christian Church, Deeper Life Bible church, Living Faith Church also known as Winners Chapel, Gospel Faith Mission, Evangelical Church, of Yahmey, Church of God, Mission Agape Church, End Time Evangelical Ministry, Christian Charismatic Ministries (CCM); Born Again Gospel Church, and many others. This scenario led to the increase in the establishment of small churches to the extent that in the early 1990s, there was a debate among Christian Council in Nigeria on the concern of the mushroom churches springing up and some for commercial purpose. According to Boyer (2000) Pentecostalism had become entrenched in the African community Pentecostal denominations separated themselves from the Baptists and Methodists and created a service style, music, language, behaviour, dress, and an attitude about their place among Christians. Pentecostalism finds support and tremendous enthusiasm among Christians of various denominations and ecclesial affinity, since it addresses the raw spiritual desire of man. The explosion of Pentecostalism in the mainline churches is an invitation to churches to reconsider their Christian testimony and proclamation of Jesus Christ as the Saviour and Redeemer of all people.

## 2. Meaning of Church Growth

In the course of this study, it is pertinent to peruse what Church growth is all about because the phenomenon "Growth" might also have differs meaning in the Church narrative as different to the lame man definition or physical description. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines growth as the natural increase in size, the process of forming or developing something and an increase in the number, amount, or size of something. The Webster's definition seems natural or physical and not spiritual. In a study by Bolejack (1994) The numerical growth of a church is gauged, for the most part, by two observable indicators in most Christian Churches and Churches of Christ: (1) New Birth experience as taught by Jesus in John 3:3-6. Because of the teaching of Jesus of the necessity of believers being baptized (Mark 16:16), the Christian Churches and

Churches of Christ will record these new birth numbers under "baptisms," and (2) transfer of membership. Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, for the most part, will accept upon the statement of their faith immersed believers from other churches who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior and previously obeyed Him in baptism into their fellowship and will record these numbers under "transfers". Bolejack does not seem to consider the numeric increase as being Church growth but believes Church growth is attributed to the spiritual encounter a person have in the declaration of faith. He seems not to have considered that the first availability of a person to a place where a declaration of faith is made is precedes all other growth in the Church.

It is associated with growing a church both externally and internally. External growth means the church grows outwardly in numbers. This is measured by growth in membership, attendance, enrollment, baptisms, or financial offerings. These growth phenomena are observable, repeatable, and measurable. The second is internal church growth. This involves spiritual growth in individuals or in the church According to (Wagner & Donald, 1990). Church growth means all that is involved in bringing men and women who do not have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ into fellowship with Him and into responsible church membership. This suppose that all it takes to bring people into fellowship of which Music and Pentecostalism are instrumental.

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## 3. Music and Pentecostalism

According to P. D. Hocken: "In Nigeria below the Islamic north, all the denominations are experiencing renewal. Prayer and fasting and signs and wonders of healing and deliverance are common. "This observation indicates the impact of Pentecostalism on the mainline churches in Nigeria. The explosion of Pentecostalism introduced into Nigeria a spirituality that was not fostered by the initial western missionaries. It inaugurated an approach to faith and ecclesial polity that is glaringly different from the initial practices of the mainline churches.

Pentecostalism has awakened a tremendous yearning for a primal spirituality in the country.

In Miller and Yamamori's (Miller and Yamamori 2007, pp. 135–36) study of global Pentecostalism, they encounter many similarly “functional” church buildings with a “plain appearance”, stripped of most religious art, but featuring “excellent sound systems”—no former nightclubs, admittedly, but certainly repurposed shopping malls and sports stadiums. They put this down to the fact that worship is an internal experience for Pentecostals.

(White, 1911) suggests that “ the act of praising is one of the signs of the descent of the Holy Spirit, saying, The Spirit came upon the waiting, praying disciples with a fullness that reached every heart. The Infinite One revealed Himself in power to His church. It was as if for ages this influence had been held in restraint, and now Heaven rejoiced in being able to pour out upon the church the riches of the Spirit's grace. And under the influence of the Spirit, words of penitence and confession mingled with songs of praise for sins forgiven. Words of thanksgiving and of prophecy were heard. All heaven bent low to behold and to adore the wisdom of matchless, incomprehensible love.

To note from the scriptural account was Peter, a disciple of Jesus, a leader of early church, and Holy Spirit possessed marveled at the sign of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and the hearers, they spoke in tongues and praised God as the sign of the descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-46). The early church experience cannot be ruled out in Church growth. According to Martin (1975) “The Christian Church was born in song” . The Early Church grew rapidly for “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). This daily explosive growing in number: “about three thousand were added [in a day]” (Acts 2:41), “the number of men grew to about five thousand” (Acts 4:4), “more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number” (Acts 5:14), “the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). This was possible because the members of the Early Church “continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people” (Acts 2:46-47).

#### 4. Music and Church Growth

The connection between music and spiritual programmes cannot be undermined as it is used in gaining the attention of people to different Church programmes such as crusades, anniversary, special worship and concerts through the use of a particular artist, a set of lyrics, or a specific song structure that appeals to the populace. This is tangent with the view of McElwain (2002) stated that the power of music in all its aspects has been much researched and implemented for the success of human business and science. Many Churches today believe it makes a whole lot of sense for them to tie music into their publicity strategies. Recently, it has become a trend in Nigeria that Churches hardly organize a programme without inviting a popular gospel musician who have gained the heart of the populace to perform at their programme. The aim of Churches is to have some of the participants added and established in the Church after the programme. This was not vogue in the early Church when pattern of music was chanting, singing of hymns and anthems. Immediately there was a shift from the conventional orthodox style of worship to the contemporary Christian style of worship introduced through Pentecostalism, Popular gospel musicians became regular artist at Church programmes. Singing in the Church was no longer limited to the Church Choir alone. Christian Popular music, reggae rock, indigenous music, praise and worship style became so pronounced and well appreciated by people. The music also introduced new musical instruments to worship. Horness (2004) describes the musical attributes valued by the contemporary style stating, Contemporary worship endeavors to use modern instrumentation (e.g., guitars, drums, synthesizers, percussion, horns), contemporary musical styles (e.g., rock, jazz, hip hop, rap, gospel), and freshly written or arranged songs (both new choruses and fresh treatments of traditional hymns), in the language of this generation to lead people into authentic expressions of worship and a genuine experience of the presence of God.

The mystic and the magical power music possess cannot be undermined in influencing drawing the attention of people and influencing lives. This is corroborated (Begbie, 2007) who says Music is ‘sounds-in-relation’ before anything else. However, just because of this, it makes very quick friends with whatever happens to be around when people hear music, a whole range of elements are pulled together in particular, our state of mind and body, memories and associations, social and cultural conventions, and

other perceptions that come along with the musical sounds.

Pentecostalism gave rise to a belief in the anointing that was the result and experience of the Pentecost day as put in Act 1:8 “But you shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon: and you shall be witnesses to Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth”. The first part in Act 2:4 says And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. Most musicians now believe they are anointed and empowered for special and powerful ministration. Hafemann (2008) writes, “To be anointed is to be set apart and gifted by God for his calling, symbolized in the Old Testament by

the pouring of olive oil as a sign of God's rich provision. Many modern worshippers, considering themselves anointed, also consider themselves God's oracle. The anointing empowers them to pull a large crowd through their ministrations. (Ibrahim, 2018) opines that music is a key medium through which Pentecostalism has grown; Pentecostal worship music circulates in physical and digital formats through formal and informal networks, laying down the cultural and theological infrastructure for new churches and new individual experiences. This shows that music play a pivot role in the growth of the Church irrespective of series of church programmes and the display of Pentecostalism in church services.



Frank Edwards at Deeper Life Lagos City Crusade  
*Source: Researcher*



Nathaniel Bassey at Redeemed Christian Church of God Holy Ghost Congress  
*Source: Internet*

## 5. Nigerian Gospel Popular Musicians Impacts

Nigeria Churches have also witnessed the emergent of Nigeria Gospel musicians' ministrations at Church crusades, revivals, retreats, concerts and anniversaries. Their involvement breaks the gene of denomination, thus make people to attend the programme irrespective of their denominations. Bebbington (2004), argued that the involvements of Popular musicians helped to change modern revivalism "in six key ways: (a) it was interdenominational, (b) it involved more lay leadership than ever before, (c) it linked the revivals with social reform, (d) its theology emphasized human will and emotion more than reason, (e) it stressed the importance of organizational strategy, and (f) it helped to encourage Christians from many denominations and traditions to join hands in common cause"



Tope Alabi at Faith Living Church

## 6. The Contemporary Gospel Music Genres Impacts

The recent impact of the contemporary Gospel musical genres in the Church cannot be undermined in Church growth. From the twentieth century, there was the emergence of musicians who explored the music of other culture and incorporated it into their indigenous music style. Vidal (2008) states that the last two decades of the twentieth century saw the emergence of new age of musicians who looked out for cross cultural influence from outside shores of Africa for new forms of musical expression, both religious and secular. These new age musicians became imitators of such western and American stereotypes as Pentecostal gospel music with cynical attitude towards Africanism. Christian Popular music; Praise and worship, reggae, rock, indigenous music, became so pronounced and well appreciated by people. Boda (2010) opines that the establishment of music ministry in the sanctuary service was the turning point of worship atmosphere in the temple of God from aural worship to verbal worship, more expressing than hearing. The blessings music invokes, the steering ability and the direct means of communication or supplication to God in the Church makes it very unique. Wilt (2009) states, Modern worship songs have emerged as a primary discipleship vehicle, guiding contemporary churches on their courses over the past fifty years. These songs, and the churches that enlist them, have grown

in influence and number, radically impacting the grass roots of Christian faith in the present generation.

### 6.1 Praise and Worship

Praise and Worship music is a genre of Christian music used in contemporary worship. It has developed over the past sixty years and is stylistically similar to pop music. The songs are frequently referred to as "praise songs" or "worship songs" and are typically led by a worship band or praise team. Sometimes intimate, language of relationship is employed in the text of the song. The terms 'You' and 'I' are used rather than 'God' and 'we', and lyrics such as, 'I, I'm desperate for You. In addition a physical response is included in the lyrics such as " So we raise up holy hands; I will dance, I will sing, to be mad for my king". This is coupled with the use of drums and popular rhythm in the songs to encourage full body worship. To have the congregation participate in a corporate act of worship. This often manifests in simple, easy-to-pick-up melodies in a mid-vocal range; repetition; familiar chord progressions and a simple harmony is used.

It is becoming a common genre of music sung in Western churches, particularly in Pentecostal churches. According to Segler and Bradley (2006), in the last decades of the twentieth century, charismatic worship has exerted a great influence on worship of

all (denominations). The charismatic model of free-flowing praise, Old Testament worship pattern, accommodation of contemporary culture, use of popular sounding music, embrace of technology, and emotional appeal has altered worship practice in many congregations around the globe. Particular to this phenomenon is the music usually referred to as 'praise and worship' music. Some popular praise and worship gospel musicians in Nigeria are Frank Edwards, Nathaniel Bassey, Jeremiah Gyang, Lara George, Ada, Sinach Patty Obasi to mention a few.

## 7. Indigenous Gospel Songs

Nigerian Indigenous Gospel music emerged in the 1970s as a distinctive genre when choral groups moved their performance from the liturgical setting in the churches into the public domain. This transition adapted Gospel music for entertainment and commercial purposes. The texts of the songs are based on biblical and traditional Christian concepts but in the local dialects. Traditional musical instruments are also used to accompany the music. Some indigenous gospel musicians in Nigeria are Tope Alabi, Shola Allyson, Sammie Okposo, TY Bello, Bola Are, Funmi Aragbaye, Onyeka Onwenu and many more.

### 7.1 Fuji Gospel

Over time, Nigeria has emanated successive waves of music such as Fuji Gospel. This music genre was a development from the popular Fuji music which has its offshoot from Islamic background. Originally, Fuji music was an Islamic type music played by the Muslim children in Yoruba land to wake the faithful for fasting or Suhur during Ramadan period most notably performed by musicians such as Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, Adewale Ayuba, Abass Obesere, Wasiu Ayinde, Alabi Pasuma, Saheed Osupa, Taiye Currency and a lot more. The music is usually accompanied with traditional musical instruments such as the Gangan, Omele isaju, itele, sekere, agogo, Goje with mixture of some western instruments such as the Keyboard and Saxophone. The lyrics is usually in Yoruba language. This music suddenly gained popularity in the Church with the mindset of appealing to the Muslim converts and also the win more muslims into the Church. The indigenous nature of the music also makes it more acceptable by the Yorubas in the Church. This wouldn't have been possible during ecclesiastical, orthodox age when indigenous or infiltration of other religion is seen as barbaric. Fuji Gospel music now became popular in Nigeria churches such as Day Star Church with the

like of Kenny King singing Fuji Praise, Midnight Crew, Mike Abdul and a lot more. This have gained acceptance in Churches that members of the Choir use the sacred or Biblical lyrics with the musical features of the fuji such as the voice texture in performing the Fuji gospel or praise in the Church.

### 7.2 Afro-Juju And High Life Music Genre

Afro-juju and highlife were widely celebrated throughout Nigeria from early 1950's until late 1990's. In recent times, hip hop music appears to be holding sway with the electronic media in Nigeria with massive airplay. The origin of this style of music was largely attributed to Ghana which later spread to Sierra Leone, Liberia, Gambia and Nigeria via Ghanaian workers, among other West African countries, by the 1930's. The music is often performed live with groups of singers and instrumentalists called a band. Nonetheless, Sunny Ade's musical output has continued to inspire a vast generation of other Nigerian and African musicians and music lovers who believe in the big band musical set up which the likes of Osita Osadebe, Sunny Ade and late Fela Kuti were noted for. This music appeals so much to the members in the Church, most especially to the adults. Their original cultural background synchronizes with the indigenous texture and structure of the afro-juju and high life music. The like of Chief Commander Ebenezer Obey became a very notable performer almost in the popular churches in Nigeria, especially after he confessed that he is born again. He is often invited at Church concerts, crusades and revivals for ministrations. His appearance at church programmes pools a lot of crowd to the venue of the church programme. A lot of people who probably go with the mindset of enjoying music entertainment sometimes change their minds and thus become a member of the Church.

It is important to note that through the various music genres, many Churches have gained recognition and people have been added to the Church. Wiersbe (2000) writes: Over the past half century, a subtle change has taken place in local churches: the sanctuary has become a theatre, ministry has become success performance, worship has turned into entertainment ('a fun time'), and applause, not the glory of God. In support of Wiersbe assertion, Gary Gilley (2005) in *This Little Church Went to Market*, suggests "the problem is that the main business of entertainment is to please the crowd. Cherry (2010) modern worship repertoire stating that it has the ability to express a full range of themes and emotions for worshippers, from high praise to lament, while liberating the spirit of even timid worshippers to join in the emotive experience of singing from the heart to

God. Music has played a significant role in the history of Christianity. Christian singing was seen in the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ (Mk. 14:26). Paul and Silas sang and worshiped the Lord in the prison (Acts 16:25). In several passages from his letters, Paul made mention of music (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). However, we should never lose sight of the use of music in the publicizing a programme. Most Churches hire the brigade band to create awareness and publicity.

## 8. Conclusion

The philosophy behind the impact of music in church growth is that the music taste of people should inform the choice of music used for worship in the Church. This paper concludes that the mystic effect and intrinsic value of music in contributing to church growth should never be undermined but considered as a viable tool together with Pentecostalism for Church growth in Nigeria. "Modern worship songs have emerged as a primary discipleship vehicle, guiding contemporary churches on their courses over the past fifty years. These songs, and the Churches that enlist them, have grown in influence and number, radically impacting the grass roots of Christian faith in our generation" Wilt (2009). Nigeria churches should see the music unit of the Church very important as they contribute immensely to the growth of the Church. Church choristers are as important as Bishops, Pastors in the Church. The understanding of the prominent role or impact of music in the church should also give more room or allocate more time for music performance during church programmes and organize special musical concerts. This research recommends that Church administrators should pay more attention to the need of the music section of the church and efficiently utilize the music section of the church as a tool for Church growth.

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