



## Cooperation, Competition and Conflict: A Historical Analysis of the Religious and Socio-Political Relations of Pentecostal Churches in Kaduna Metropolis, 1970-2020

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**Abstract.** The focus of this article is the religious pluralism of the Kaduna Metropolis, and its socio-political implications on inter- and intra-faith relations in a rapidly changing urban context. It examines the relationship between Pentecostal churches, other Christian denominations, non-Christians, and the institution of the state between 1970 and 2020. Against this background, it investigates the factors that have necessitated Christian collaboration such as the shared objectives of proselytization, common socio-political concerns, and joint initiatives such as crusades and community development projects in the metropolis. It also analyses the elements that have fuelled inter and intra-religious tensions, especially the pursuit of followership, as well as the regulatory roles of the Kaduna State Government which has been a subject of debate. On the strength of largely primary sources, research findings reveal that Pentecostalism's growth in Kaduna Metropolis has engendered complex relationships with religious and secular institutions. Initial interdenominational tensions within Christianity evolved into cooperation and cross-denominational influence. Simultaneously, Pentecostal churches navigated interreligious (Christian-Muslim) dynamics and contributed to both peacebuilding and conflict. The article concludes that their relationship with the Kaduna State Government is also marked by cooperation and tension, fueled by concerns regarding religious freedom and perceived

marginalization, which underscores the need for interfaith dialogue and collaborative governance.

**Keywords:** Cooperation, Competition, Conflict, Pentecostalism, Relations

### 1. Introduction

Kaduna Metropolis is located between latitude 9<sup>o</sup>N and 12<sup>o</sup>N of the equator and longitude 6<sup>o</sup>E and 9<sup>o</sup>E of the prime meridian. Apart from being the capital city of Kaduna State, the area is also one of the major urban centers of Nigeria. Generally, the metropolis consists of four Local Government Areas (LGAs), with Kaduna North and Kaduna South LGAs being the most cosmopolitan in terms of religious and ethnic diversity. Chikun LGAs to the South and Igabi to the North, form the expanding parts of the metropolis. In specific terms, it is composed of the entire Kaduna North and Kaduna South Local Governments, some parts of Igabi LGA (the whole of Rigachikun and Rigasa up to the Kaduna International Airport, parts of Chikun LG (including Sabon Tasha to the Kaduna Refinery and environs, as well as the Kaduna Millennium City). As a whole, Kaduna State is bordered to the South-West by Abuja and Niger, to the North West by Katsina and Zamfara, to the North-East by Kano and Bauchi, and to the South East by Plateau and Nasarawa.

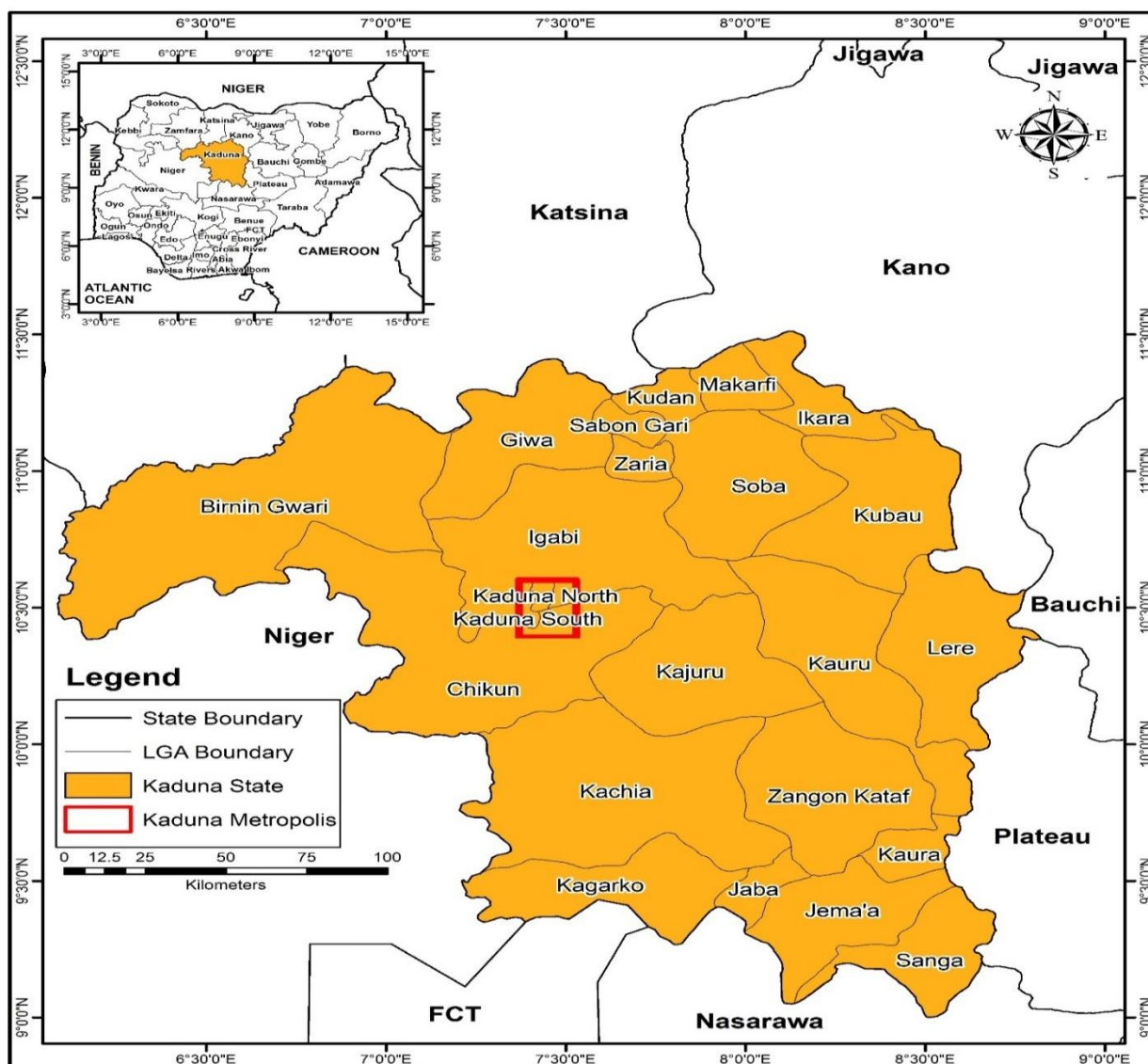


Figure 1: Kaduna State showing Kaduna Metropolis (Study Area)  
 Source: Adapted and modified from the administrative map of Kaduna State, 2014

Pentecostalism's rapid growth in Africa has significantly impacted not only the religious landscape but also the socio-political and economic spheres. Its large-scale operations have provided access to essential services like education, employment, and healthcare. Pentecostal churches have also actively engaged in empowerment programs, especially for women and youth, and have advocated for social and political changes through community development initiatives and political activism. Pentecostalism began in Nigeria during the colonial period and has both local and global origins. Its local origin is traceable to the secessionist movement within the Anglican Communion in Lagos between 1900 and 1914 in search of an Afro-centric revivalist expression of Christianity.

The 1920s and 30s also witnessed a surge in the establishment of indigenous Christian denominations within the Yoruba communities of Western Nigeria. These churches, such as the Precious Stone Society, Cherubim and Seraphim, and Church of the Lord (Aladura), emerged independent of Western influence. Characterized by a Pentecostal emphasis on the manifestation of charismatic gifts, these churches incorporated elements of African Traditional Religion (ATR). This distinct blend of Christianity and African spirituality contributed to their widespread appeal and growth. The Holy Spirit Movement spread to Eastern Nigeria within the same period. For instance, the Spirit Movement of 1927 among the Annang and Ibibio people in present-day Akwa Ibom State led to the expansion of the Qua-Iboe missions. Similarly, a revival among laymen in old Umuahia in 1934 resulted in the

establishment of the Assemblies of God church in Nigeria.

Global Pentecostalism, particularly influenced by the Azusa Street Revival (1906-1909), began making inroads into Nigeria in the early 20th century. Through the activities of missionary organizations like the Apostolic Faith Mission, Assemblies of God, and Pentecostal Zionist Movement, Pentecostalism gained momentum in Nigeria. The 1930s and 1960s witnessed a notable increase in affiliations between foreign and indigenous Pentecostal denominations. The partnership between Joseph Ayo Babalola and Sydney Granville Elton from the Faith Tabernacle in Britain played a pivotal role in expanding Pentecostalism beyond the southern regions of Nigeria to the Kaduna metropolis, and its gradual spread to other Northern cities. Colonial and post-colonial urbanisation leading to increased economic opportunities and migrations into the Kaduna metropolis created a fertile ground for Pentecostalism to flourish. Migration from Southern Nigeria brought new Christian influences, while economic hardships resonated with Pentecostal messages of prosperity.

Disillusioned with the perceived rigidity and lack of spiritual experience in mainline churches, the inhabitants of the metropolis found Pentecostalism's emphasis on the Holy Spirit and charismatic practices more appealing. The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) and the activism of student Christian organizations like the Scripture Union (SU), Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS), Calvary Ministries, etc. at the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) and Kaduna Polytechnic, further fuelled Pentecostal growth in the study area. Pentecostal leaders, mostly from Southern Nigeria, adopted urban-centric strategies like home fellowships and street evangelism to carve a niche for themselves in a terrain that was dominated by mainline churches. These churches initially tried to contain Pentecostalism through theological arguments and dissuasion tactics. Later, they adopted revival programs to win back members. These efforts largely failed as Pentecostalism continued its expansion through the 1980s and 90s, given its hope-centered, pragmatic, and dynamic variant of Christianity in the phase of socio-political and economic crises in Nigeria.

Consequently, the religious landscape of Kaduna Metropolis has undergone significant transformations over the past five decades, particularly within the Pentecostal community. Since the 1970s, Pentecostal churches in Kaduna have experienced a dynamic interplay between cooperation and competition, shaped by both internal theological developments and external religious and socio-political pressures. While Pentecostalism in Nigeria has been widely studied in terms of its rapid growth and charismatic appeal, there remains a gap in understanding the specific ways in which Pentecostal churches in Kaduna have navigated the dual forces of cooperation and competition in their

religious and socio-political engagements. This research fills this gap by exploring how Pentecostal churches in Kaduna have interacted with one another, non-Christians, and the broader socio-political context within the period of study. In particular, it investigates how these relationships have influenced both their cooperative initiatives and competitive dynamics, as well as their evolving role as socio-political actors and religious communities. This is important because Pentecostal churches have been deeply involved in almost every sector of Kaduna's volatile terrain of inter-religious conflicts for decades, and have contributed to, and challenged its existing religious and socio-political landscapes since their emergence in the 1970s.

### 1. Conceptual Clarification

Conceptualising Pentecostalism has been very problematic given the variations in beliefs and practices among Pentecostals. The independent and decentralized nature of the movement has given rise to over 700 denominations globally (Schneider, 2016). It is also difficult to reduce Pentecostalism to just a movement because it is eclectic and diverse in organization, liturgy, and matters of faith, which makes it dynamic and able to adapt to societal changes over time. In Nigeria, Pentecostalism may be categorized into three viz. indigenous Pentecostals, classical Pentecostals, and neo-classical (modern) Pentecostals. According to Olufunke Adeboye, the major difference between classical Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism is the degree to which they respond to local changes and the globalization of Christianity (Adeboye, 2006). While classical Pentecostals are moderates, neo-Pentecostals are the most recent ones and are more susceptible to global events.

Also, they tend to cross doctrinal and denominational boundaries. An example could be seen in its belief that prosperity is one of the benefits of being Christian. Indigenous Pentecostals are home-grown, such as the *Aladura* (practitioners of prayers) movement. It comprised Cherubim and Seraphim and the Church of the Lord, which were driven by greater yearnings for spirituality, visions, and supernatural interventions lacking in missionary orders, through long prayers and fasting (Adeboye, 2006). What is common among all the categories is the belief in the profound experience of a new life through the Holy Spirit after conversion, which produces spiritual gifts (charismata) and enables the performance of miracles.

The day of Pentecost, when the apostles of Jesus Christ and other believers received the gift of the Holy Spirit, holds the key to understanding the concept. The monumental day is universally thought to mark the birth of the church and by extension, the origin of Christendom (Acts 2: 1-31; Exodus 12:27). It is also traceable to an Old Testament prophecy of a release of God's spirit on all

believers in the ‘last days’, which will be at variance with what was obtained before the first advent of Christ (Joel 2: 28-30). The age of the Spirit was echoed in the synoptic gospels (Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John) and re-affirmed by Christ before his ‘ascension to heaven’. His disciples turned apostles, were instructed by Christ to wait in an ‘upper room’ in Jerusalem for the promised age of the Spirit and its accompanying power before they started to evangelize. The promise was fulfilled in the book of Acts of the Apostles, which recorded the experience and the powerful signs and wonders that followed the evangelistic missions of the apostles and other believers (Acts 2:1-31).

Pentecostalism, is thus, one of the evangelical faiths in the world that believes in the inerrancy of the bible and the transformation of Christians through the enabling life in Christ. According to the Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements, it is a worldwide and trans-denominational outpouring of the Spirit of God, with the evidence of speaking in tongues (glossolalia) (Engelsman, 2001). It is tripartite— a denomination, an experience, and a movement. As a protestant denomination, it embraces the ‘full gospel’ or ‘foursquare gospel’, which includes the belief that Jesus saves, baptizes saved sinners with the Holy Spirit, heals the sick, and is coming the second time to rapture his saved ones (Engelsman, 2001).

Additionally, it advocates direct/personal experience of God through repentance and baptism of the Holy Spirit, unlike mainstream Christianity, which holds that regular church attendance for prayers and worship, bible studies, and being taught and guided by the clergy, suffices. Experientially, it is centered on the supernatural realm and encounters through dreams and visions, enabled by the Holy Spirit, which creates the born-again identity and its “charismatic” features. As a movement, it holds that a Holy Spirit baptism and its attendant charismatic gifts of the spirit should be the normative religious experience of all Christians (Nichol, 1965). Thus, it seeks to replicate the experiences and outcomes of the day of Pentecost, which endowed Christ’s apostles with spiritual power to perform miracles as Jesus Christ had foretold.

Therefore, it is a blunt rejection of the long-held orthodox position that the supernatural enabling gifts of the Spirit that manifested in the lives of the apostles had ceased (Ijaola, 2023). In other words, the movement is energized by the need to return to the very foundations of the Christian church, which was apostolic. This explains why the movement aims at restoring ‘apostolic Christianity’, believed to have been lost to the ritualistic Christianity bequeathed to the world by the Roman Catholic and other orthodox churches.

It is instructive to note that the emphasis on the manifestation of spiritual gifts by Pentecostals is based on the assumption that it is the most reliable and sustainable solution to socio-economic and political

problems in society. This belief is informed by its conclusion that human suffering is caused by Satan, contrary to conventional Christian thought that alludes suffering to the sovereignty of God in human affairs. Against this background, Pentecostals prioritize connectivity with the Holy Spirit and value divine manifestation such as prophecy, dreams and visions, and deliverance from evil spirits (Ijaola, 2023). Consequently, adherents are taught the strange and ridiculous doctrine of the sovereignty of Satan, which they uncritically accept and have come under perpetual guilt and fear. In this case, God is relegated to the position of the victim and is at the mercy of Satan, who is presented as more powerful.

Pentecostalism lacks regulations. Its insistence on total loyalty and acceptance of all its claims, makes it opposed to constructive criticisms and corrections. This is why it has been characterized by claims and counterclaims, dubiously justified by the argument that revelation is progressive (Oslo, 2006). The implication is that anyone who claims to have had supernatural experiences in the form of angelic visitations and personal experiences with Christ, irrespective of his/her education status and spiritual growth, is admitted into the fold. The lack of checks and balances in Pentecostal churches is inextricably rooted in its origin and development, which shows a preference for the culture of individualism that more often than not, paves the way for doctrinal aberrations, as there are little or no controls and no sound trajectories to follow (Fahy, 1988).

## 2. Early Reactions to the Emergence of Pentecostalism in Kaduna Metropolis

It is imperative to examine the response of mainline churches to the emergence and development of Pentecostalism in the area of study during the 60s and 70s. Established by the missionary societies that evangelized the study area during the colonial period, mainline churches adopted what may be termed a ‘containment policy’ out of fear of mass exodus to Pentecostal organizations. The strategy aimed to dissuade the youth from what was derisively called ‘rascals’ – leaders and devoted followers of the movement – and Pentecostalism itself. It was also an attempt to counteract the appeal and influence of Pentecostalism, which was perceived as a threat to the established Christian institutions of the time (D. Wobin, Personal Communication, March 30, 2024). David Wobin narrated how the policy saved him and many of his friends from embracing Pentecostalism after he had made up his mind to join the religious fervor. He observed that “the profound testimonies, worship styles, enthusiasm, and optimism the movement brought to bear in the metropolis attracted him but the containment policy of the Catholic Church, which focused on the ‘falsities’ of the denomination with ‘facts’ from the bible, held him back (Wobin, Personal Communication). Furthermore,

he later realized that the testimonies that initially caught his attention were fabricated, which made him content with his choice not to join them. He also experienced the loss of a friend due to typhoid fever because the friend declined medical treatment in favor of faith healing” (Wobin, Personal Communication).

Worthy of mention are the proponents of the containment policy who suggested that the ‘erring’ youths should be allowed to continue their activities without interference. This liberal policy was based on the assumption that if the movement was truly inspired by God it would continue unhindered but if not, it would die a natural death (Wobin, Personal Communication). Indeed, the movement continued unabated and even attracted more followers from the mainline churches. According to Rev. E.A. Akintola, the failed assumption that the movement would come to ruin because it was established on a faulty foundation did not put an end to the attempts made by the mainline churches to stop it. He observes that the pastor of the Baptist Church at Hayin Banki Kawo in the late 1970s beckoned on him to enroll at the BTS so that he could have a solid theological and doctrinal perspective before he went into ministry. In his words:

*I told him categorically that I have discovered the difference between orthodox Christianity and Pentecostalism; it is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the living God, who empowers men and women to live an evidential Christian life as recorded in the book of Acts of the Apostles. No turning back* (E. Akintola, Personal Communication, April 12, 2023)!

The attempt by the Baptist pastor to persuade him to attend a Baptist seminary seemed to be to disarticulate and disorient him from the Pentecostal theology, which he had embraced, despite his Baptist background. It is instructive to note that the failure of religious diplomacy with the ‘trespassing youths’ led to a hardline posture by the Church to curtail or minimize their influence on those who had not been caught up in the Christian revolution of the period. As a result, the youths who continued to fellowship with the Pentecostal fellowships in the metropolis were not only accused of rebellion against the constituted authority of their various churches but were also declared rebels and expelled with immediate alacrity. Pentecostalism was denounced as heresy or a cult, the objective being to discourage people from joining the movement (J. Adedeji, Personal Communication, January 30, 2024).

Additionally, parents of the youths who left some of the mainline churches, especially the Anglican Communion, were denied the opportunity of having their children wedded in the church. The frustration experienced by parents when their children wedded in small Pentecostal fellowships led them to intensify their efforts to curtail this trend (M. Nwaonu, Personal Communication, April 24, 2024). These tactics were followed by increased evangelism through revival gatherings, crusades, and

other outreach initiatives aimed at reclaiming members who had been attracted to Pentecostalism (Nwaonu, Personal Communication). Despite all of these efforts, the movement continued to expand as a result of its message centered on optimism, divine intervention, and individual empowerment, through spiritual encounters such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing, and deliverance. Residents in the metropolis persisted in seeking comfort and purpose from the Pentecostal movement and its charismatic leaders against the backdrop of political and economic instability.

### 3. Pentecostal Churches and Non-Pentecostals in Kaduna in the Kaduna Metropolis Since the 1980s

The relationship between Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal churches was frosty in the 1980s and early 1990s. The Cold War-like antagonistic relationships between them are deeply historical and theological in the context of two schools of thought in global Christendom. They are Continuationism and Cessationism. The schismatic schools are a product of a complex and dynamic intersection of diverse Christian cultures, personal experiences, and theological perspectives in interpreting the Christian scriptures. Both have also undergone changes through the practices and beliefs of the early Church, the development of medieval theology, the theological debates of the Reformation era, the emphasis on spiritual renewal seen in revival movements, and the recent currents of Charismatic and Pentecostal renewal (Gundry & Grudem, 1996).

While the continuationists poignantly assert that spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, and healing as outlined in the New Testament remain active in the contemporary church, cessationists maintain that these gifts ceased after the apostolic era or the canonization of the Holy Bible (Gundry & Grudem, 1996). It is instructive to note that while mainline churches and scholars hold onto cessationist beliefs and traditions, the Pentecostals are irredeemably proponents of continuationism. The controversy surrounding the two extreme positions is particularly challenging because both have scriptural (biblical) support for their claims (See Acts 2: 38-39, 1 Corinthians 14:39, Mark 16: 17-18 &; 1 Corinthians 13-8-10, Mathew 16:4).

In line with this differing theological posture, both considered each other unchristian in outlook and practice and locked horns in what may be aptly described as a counter-religious discourse and scramble for space in the metropolis. In the counter-discourse and scramble for space, both began preaching against each other in the 1980s and 90s. The mainline churches did not want to have anything to do with the Pentecostals (Akintola, Personal Communication). They also took a reactionary position because the comfort and unrivaled position they enjoyed before the 1970s was challenged by the fast-

growing Pentecostalism. There were instances in which the leaders of mainline churches walked out of events and crusades due to the presence of Pentecostal leaders (W. Mbuk, Personal Communication, June 10, 2024). Similarly, some of the mainline churches were said to have used their influence in government to deny Pentecostals the use of big facilities such as the Ahmadu Bello Stadium and the Murtala Square (Y. Barnabas, Personal Communication, May 8, 2024). This was because of their conservative and careful approach to acclaimed miraculous occurrences in Pentecostal churches in tandem with their cessationist tradition. They were also wary of practices within Pentecostal churches such as slaying in the spirit and divination that blur the lines between divine intervention and occult activities (S. Dankande, Personal Communication, May 29, 2024). In other words, the similarity between Pentecostal practices and occult activities triggered suspicion within mainline churches regarding the source of their spiritual powers.

Another concern of the mainline churches was the abuse of the 'gifts of the Holy Spirit' (Barnabas, Personal Communication). This was visible through the commercialization of the gospel by Pentecostal churches, which turned the gospel into a money-making venture, as we have shown in their growth trajectory. The missionary orders were also critical of independent Pentecostal churches because of their poor church organization and the lack of regulatory mechanisms to instill order and discipline in their ranks (Barnabas, Personal Communication). Against this background, they argued that the theology of prosperity and the supposed power of the Holy Spirit were manipulated, and used to lure, abuse, exploit, and deprive the unsuspecting of their means of livelihood by charlatans/false prophets in the metropolis since the 1980s (Dankande, Personal Communication).

In Pentecostal circles, mainline churches were described as congregations of the dead given their solemn way of worship, which is the direct opposite of the vibrant style of worship in Pentecostal churches, which they considered the congregations of the living (Mbuk, Personal Communication). This implies that mainline churches were essentially religious but devoid of spirituality. The Catholic Church was in this regard categorized under idol worship for its use of candles to celebrate Eucharistic liturgy and a mission field in dire need of power evangelism (D. Okworie, Personal Communication, May 29, 2024). The Baptists, Anglicans, ECWA, etc. were thought to be uninspiring and lackluster in their approach to Christianity (S. Oyedokun, Personal Communication, July 5, 2024). In addition, mainline churches were also presented in messages as lacking in spiritual power and working against the spread of the gospel (Dankande; Oyedokun; Nwaonu, Personal Communication).

This was because of their perceived concerted efforts at undermining Pentecostalism at all costs. According to

Yahemba and Akintola, one would not be wrong to say that the only problem of mainline churches between 1980 and 1999 was Pentecostalism (V. Yahemba, Personal Communication, January, 2023). More disturbing for the mainline churches was the fact that they were rapidly losing their members to the vibrant and seemingly result-oriented services Pentecostalism had introduced to the metropolis. Thus, the unfriendly relations between Pentecostal churches and mainline churches in our area and period of study, reflected the continuation of one of the most contentious and longstanding debates in Christian theology, as espoused by the continuationists and the cessationists.

However, the remarkable growth of Pentecostal churches since the 1990s heralded a new dimension in the relationships between Pentecostal churches and non-Pentecostals. Mainline churches, in particular, recognized the fact that the charismatic denomination had come to stay, with profound influence on their congregations (Yahemba, Personal Communication). This period saw the adoption of what may be referred to as "the policy of assimilation" by the mainline churches. The major objective of the policy was to absorb elements of Pentecostalism into their practices to stem the tide of mass exodus from their churches to Pentecostal churches, which started in the 1970s and reached its peak in 1999.

This means that mainline churches set out to extinguish the appeal of Pentecostalism in their congregations and to retain their members. The first initiative in this regard was the setting up of youth churches that were as vibrant as their Pentecostal counterparts by the Anglicans, Baptists, etc (Nwaonu, Personal Communication). In the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), the Charismatic Renewal Movement which slowly began in the 1970 and faced stiff resistance from church authorities was allowed to thrive. Attempts to disband it greatly declined in the 1990s for fear that such a move could bring about a major decline in membership (Okworie, Personal Communication). These groups of young people wholeheartedly embraced Pentecostal and charismatic revival fervor and spirituality but chose to remain in the mainline orders as reformists within the old order, because of the assimilation policy. Furthermore, mainline churches began incorporating charismatic practices such as speaking in tongues, deliverances, and faith healing, hitherto prohibited, into their services (Barnabas, Personal Communication). Night prayers, advertisements of programs, concerts, and crusades which were exclusive to Pentecostal churches were also embraced by the mainline churches in the metropolis.

The period also saw the introduction of English services and the emulation of contemporary worship styles through the use of modern musical instruments by the choirs of mainline churches to make services lively, engaging, and attractive (Anonymous, Personal Communication, June 3, 2024). Like their Pentecostal

counterparts, they began preaching short and interactive messages, which could hardly be differentiated from those of Pentecostal churches. The emphasis on mission, evangelism, and large-scale crusades undertaken by mainline churches was another aspect of the assimilationist policy of the period. Pentecostal churches, as earlier shown, carried out aggressive evangelism and outreach programs to people from various religious backgrounds in the metropolis since the 1970s. Mainline churches were influenced by this approach. Their efforts in reaching out to communities in the metropolis have increased since the 1990s through free medical outreaches, educational support, and social welfare initiatives, meant to counter the growth of Pentecostalism (O. Lazarus, Personal Communication, June 2024).

As part of the thaw in relations, Pentecostal preachers such as Oyedepo and Olaiya have been invited to preach at events organized by some Baptist and ECWA churches (Barnabas, Personal Communication); an indication that the relationship became much better than what it used to be in the 1970s and 80s. This also shows that Pentecostal revival has caught up with missionary churches, whose leadership once resisted it. The paradigm shift has transformed the Christian religious landscape of the metropolis, and also arguably blurred the lines between established Christian denominations. It is however eminently important to note that the relationship has also seen mainline churches influence Pentecostal churches, especially in the area of church organization and administration. For instance, Pentecostal churches have emulated aspects of the efficient organizational structures of mainline churches, which involve a clear hierarchy, specialized departments, and effective channels of communication (Mbuk; Barnabas, Personal Communication). The adoption of some of these models has led to improved administrative efficiency in Pentecostal churches and enabled them to serve their congregations better. One aspect of the leadership structure of mainline churches which these churches have shown no inclination to, is their regulatory framework, which is antithetical to the independent and individualistic traditions of Pentecostalism.

It is important to note that the relationship between Pentecostal churches in the metropolis within the period of study was also characterized by unhealthy rivalry for space, people, resources, and visibility (D. Damina, Personal Communication, September 17, 2024). This fact in their relationship may not be unconnected to the business-like nature of Pentecostalism, which gives presidents and founders unfettered access to wealth and power/influence and unquestionable loyalty. Similarly, their relationship with indigenous Pentecostal churches, the AICs, was also tense due to counter accusations of the infusion of aspects of ATR into their church practices. However, the relationships between the the major Pentecostal churches such as the Living Faith Church (LFC), the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG),

and the Living Faith Foundation (LFF) were cordial and cooperative. They related with each other through the umbrella of the PFN, where their leaders were foundational members, were held in high esteem, and were considered fathers of faith in Nigeria. Secondly, both Bishop Oyedepo and Rev. P.J.A. Olaiya, the founders and overseers of the LFC and LFF respectively, have been ministry partners and were ordained in the 1980s by Pastor Enoch Adeboye, the leader of the RCCG, whom they consider as their spiritual leader in the Christian faith (M. Olajide, Personal Communication, April 30, 2024). The relationship was so close that there were instances in which they preached in each other's congregations.

#### 4. Pentecostal Churches and Relations with the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)

The steady growth of Christianity in Nigeria since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century created the need for organizational frameworks to foster unity and cooperation amongst Christians. The first of such frameworks was CAN, which was established in 1976 (Oyedokun, Personal Communication), at a time when religion had gained prominence in Nigerian politics due to the rise of independent charismatic Christianity and reformist Islam. CAN is an association of Christian churches with distinct identities, recognizable structures, and a system of worship centered on the gospel of Jesus Christ. It exists to meet regularly and to take joint actions on matters, especially on those issues that affect the Christian faith and the welfare of the generality of Nigerians. It included only three Christian denominations in its early years – the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), which comprised other mainline churches, and others (Barnabas, Personal Communication). The inadequate representation of Pentecostal churches in CAN between 1976 and 1990 highlights the frosty relationship between it and the mainline churches, traceable to the 1960s and 70s when Pentecostalism emerged in Nigeria's religious landscape. The designation of 'others' in reference to Pentecostal churches within the CAN could be interpreted as a polite way of casting doubts on the legitimacy of Pentecostalism by some member churches.

Thus, the formation of the PFN seems to be in response to this polite disregard and a burning desire for an umbrella organization that will bring together all Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. Essentially, it was deemed necessary in light of the national discourse centered on the need to regulate "mushroom churches" that proliferated in Nigeria in the 1980s, the majority of which were independent churches (E. Yahay, Personal Communication, August 27, 2024). The plan which intended to mandate churches to register with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), was considered an attempt to slow down the growth of Pentecostalism by Pentecostal leaders because the majority of their churches

at that time may not be able to afford the financial requirements for their incorporation. The major leaders of Pentecostal churches, thus, thought it wise to form an umbrella organization, which will be incorporated, so that smaller Pentecostal churches that may not be able to afford the cost of incorporation can be covered by their membership of the organization (Yahaya, Personal Communication).

PFN was the brainchild of one Rev S.O. Odunaike, but it was not until in 1985 at a crusade in Lagos, dubbed the Greater Lagos Crusade for Christ, which was organized by Evangelist Umma Ukpai that the platform was created to rally all Pentecostals for that city-wide crusade (Barnabas, Personal Communication). It was inaugurated in October 1985 at the Lagos City Hall but formally incorporated on June 12, 1989, with Rev. Dr. James Boyejo serving as its first president from 1985 to 1992. He was succeeded by Pastor Adeboye, the late Archbishop Idahosa, and Bishop Mike Okonkwo for the remainder of the 1990s (Barnabas, Personal Communication). PFN is a voluntary organization that is open to all Pentecostal churches who believe in its objectives and standard procedures for operations so they can encourage, and inspire each other and cooperate for the furtherance of the cause of the gospel without hindrances (E. Adekoya, Personal Communication, June 10, 2024). Its voluntary status implies that members have the right to withdraw their membership whenever they feel like it. It also exists to cooperate with government and non-governmental organizations in matters affecting Christianity, especially those relating to religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence, and to appoint representatives to the national and state executives of CAN (Adekoya, Personal Communication).

It is important to note that PFN was inaugurated in Kaduna State between 1988 and 1989 by the late Archbishop Benson Idahosa. Before the inauguration, the Kaduna State/Katsina State Evangelical Minister's Association (KKEMA) was founded in 1987 just after Katsina State was created from Kaduna State by Evangelist Mathew Owojaiye (Chairman), Bishop Dr. Peter Oluwayemi Olorunsola (Vice Chairman) and Evangelist Raphael Opawoye (Secretary) to rally Pentecostal churches together (Yahaya, Personal Communication). The venue for the association's meeting was Hospital Christian Fellowship (now Good News Chapel), Ungwan Rimi, Kaduna State. It was KKEMA that metamorphosed into the Kaduna State chapter of the PFN. Rev. Tony Hamed and Evangelist Raphael Opawoye were chosen to pilot its affairs as chairman and secretary respectively.

In 1990, however, Reverend Samuel Olutoye became the substantive chairman after misunderstandings and quarrels arose amongst the executives which they could not resolve amongst themselves. Rev. Samuel Adeeko Bamidele was also chosen to oversee the activities of all zones (Yahaya, Personal Communication). PFN was inaugurated in other Northern States in the 1990s, starting from Minna (Niger state), to Birnin Kebbi (Kebbi state), and then to Sokoto, Kano, Jigawa, Borno, Plateau, etc. by the Kaduna State chapter, under the leadership of Rev. Olutoye (National Deputy President of PFN, Northern states) Evangelist Opawoye (Northern states PFN secretary) and Bishop Dr. Olorunsola (Elder and adviser Northern states PFN) (E. Eogh, Personal Communication, August 22, 2024). The table below presents the leadership of the Kaduna State Chapter of the PFN within the period of study:

**Table 1:** Kaduna State PFN Leadership, 1987-20220

| Term      | Chairman                 | Vice Chairman                         | Secretary                  | Treasurer           |
|-----------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1987-1988 | Evang. Mathew Owojaiye   | Bishop Dr. Peter Oluwayemi Olorunsola | Late Evang. Raphael Opaoye | N/A                 |
| 1988-1989 | Rev. Tony Hamed          | N/A                                   | Raphael Opawoye            | N/A                 |
| 1990-1999 | Rev. Samuel Olutoye      | N/A                                   | Raphael Opawoye            | N/A                 |
| 2000-2002 | Rev. S Olutoye           | Rev. Eyo Edet                         | Evang. Ralph Opawoye       | N/A                 |
| 2003-2004 | Rev. J Ajayi             | N/A                                   | Evang. Ralph Opawoye       | N/A                 |
| 2005-2010 | Bishop David Bakare      | Rev. Dr. Kujiyat                      | Rev. Dr. S Balogun         | Rev. J. Onyeanusu   |
| 2011-2013 | Rev. Prof. Femi Ehinmidu | Apst E. E. Bako                       | Rev. Tony Inwulale         | Rev. Emmanuel Dauda |
| 2014-2017 | Rev. Prof. Femi Ehinmidu | Apst E. E. Bako                       | Rev. Tony Inwulale         | N/A                 |
| 2018-2020 | Apst E. E. Bako          | Rev. Abayomi Adekoya                  | Rev. Tony Inwulale         | Rev. Emmanuel Dauda |

*Source:* List of PFN Leaders in Kaduna, Nigeria (State Secretariat)

It is interesting to note that CAN's constitution as revised by its 1991 assembly increased the Christian denominations within it to five. These include the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), CCN, Christian

Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (CPFN)/PFN, Organisation of African Instituted Churches (OAIC), and Tekan and ECWA Fellowships (TEF). A critical look at the new composition of CAN shows a unity of opposites

as it brings together the missionary, indigenous Pentecostal, and neo-Pentecostal orders of the Christian faith. Nonetheless, it led to increased collaboration between all the Christian denominations, which resulted in joint initiatives such as prayer meetings, conferences, and community service projects. This is because both organizations share a common interest in advocating for Christian rights and values in Nigeria, as well as religious freedom and the role of faith in public life. Inter-organizational cooperation and collaboration have also created avenues for them to speak with one voice in defense of Christians during the Zangon Kataf Crisis of 1992 (A. Bassey, Personal Communication, June 3, 2024).

Furthermore, the addition of PFN as one of the constituents of CAN, suggests that the mainline churches have come to terms with the fact that Pentecostalism has come to stay. The reason is that PFN's official recognition in CAN coincided with the period of its rapid growth in the metropolis and the nation at large. The period also saw the emergence of powerful Pentecostal figures such as Idahosa, Okonkwo Adebayo, Oyedepo, and Olaiya, among others, in Nigeria's religious landscape, which mainline church leaders could no longer ignore. Thus, although the predominant mainline churches within the CAN continue to maintain differing theological and operational perspectives from the Pentecostal churches of the PFN, they have nonetheless acknowledged the importance of continued dialogue to preserve unity among Nigerian Christians. This approach promotes respectful interactions that respect the right of Christians to hold diverse opinions while upholding their common commitment to Christian values and faith in Jesus Christ.

##### **5. Pentecostal Churches and Inter-Religious Conflicts in Kaduna**

Inter-religious conflicts in Kaduna have been a major source of tension and violent clashes between Muslims and Christians who are predominantly concentrated in the Northern and Southern parts of the state. Some of the major religious conflicts recorded in the state include but may not be limited to the following: the Kafanchan Crisis (1987-1992), the Kaduna Sharia Riots (2000), and the Miss World Riots (2002). As discussed earlier, a new generation emerged within Nigeria's postcolonial political milieu, placing their trust in the competing ideologies of divergent religious movements. These movements, whether Pentecostal or Islamic reformist, employ similar strategies to propagate their faiths, despite their distinct religious doctrines and political perspectives. Initially focused on the revival and renewal of their respective religious traditions, both movements were heavily influenced by national and transnational dynamics. Emerging from similar social classes and products of post-colonial educational institutions, they aimed to instill moral and political renewal amidst the

turmoil of the oil-boom era through religious revitalization.

Their competing agendas inevitably led to clashes, with provocations from both sides escalating the pursuit of converts and political influence into increasingly violent confrontations (Bassey, Personal Communication). Born within the vortex of rapidly evolving demographic and ethno-religious landscapes, the recurrent conflicts between Muslims and Christians in the metropolis reflect deeper structural tensions between Pentecostal and Islamic reformist movements. This tension stems from the politicization of religious identities among Christians and Muslims, mostly fueled by the growing organizational influence of Pentecostal Christianity, through its global networks. These intricate social and political dynamics of religious movements in the metropolis would significantly shape Nigeria's state and society during the civilian administration of Olusegun Obasanjo. The period witnessed twelve Northern state governments, including Kaduna, adopting Sharia law as a state religion (Ashafa, 2015). This development heightened the already tensed religious milieu, with the Christian community of the state, through the agency of the PFN working tirelessly to preserve the religious diversity of the state.

The vibrant nature of worship by Pentecostals has also affected its relationships with non-Christians, especially the Muslims, who accuse them of needless disturbances during the worship, mostly at night times. The reason is that the majority of the Pentecostal churches in the metropolis are concentrated in residential areas. The decision on the path of the Pentecostals to not adjust their style of worship has occasionally led to conflicts with some of the Muslim communities within the metropolis (A. Sani, Personal Communication, December 23, 2024). Some of these conflicts, which have led to the involvement of the police, did not escalate within the concerned neighborhood. They were in most cases referred to community leaders who knew the actors concerned very well for intervention (Sani, Personal Communication). This explains why they have been well-managed and resolved amicably without escalations.

A good example could be seen in the case of Kakuri. The area which was once dominated by Christians is now torn between Christians and Muslims due to the increasing sale of property to Muslims by some Christians who desire to move to Kaduna South, an area they consider safer in light of the Muslim-Christian divide of the State. In the year 2020, a serious inter-religious tension broke out at Zango Street of Makera, Kakuri. The increasing purchase of property in the area has led to an increase in its Muslim population very close to the Deeper Life Christian Church, which is now neighbored by Muslims (Yahaya, Personal Communication). The Muslim community on the street has tried but without success to reduce what it considers as noise pollution during

worship. This led to the invitation of the police and the arrest of the pastor in charge of the church.

The leaders of PFN in the area under the leadership of Reverend Emmanuel Yahaya intervened, leading to the transfer of the case to the Hakimi of the area, who the PFN claimed was a relation of the wife of Governor Nasir Ahmed El-Rufai, and feared unfairness in resolving the matter. The Hakimi pleaded with both parties to forgive one another, exercise patience, and engage in dialogue. He called on the leadership of the church and the Muslim community to accept the new reality of living side by side while calling on the church to moderate the vibrancy of its worship which was the major cause of the conflict (Bassey, Personal Communication). He also advised the Muslim community to not buy property next to churches in the future to avoid a repeat of the situation. His intervention was hailed by the PFN leadership of Kakuri as both timely and constructive (Yahaya, Personal Communication).

According to Rev Yahaya, churches in Kakuri were thereafter advised to discourage their members from selling their property to Muslims when they intend to live but to no avail (Bako, Personal Communication). This was because the majority of the buyers were financially distressed persons and the fact that Muslim buyers were always available to buy them at good prices compared to the Christians that show interest. Similar experiences have been reported in Barnawa, Mando, and the outskirts of Malali, Ungwan Maisamari, to be specific (T. Omoloye, Personal Communication, November 2024). The Christian community in the metropolis fears that the increase in the purchase of land in Christian-dominated areas is a subtle means to achieve the ‘longstanding Islamisation agenda’ in the state which has yet to materialize since the Sharia crises. This informs their unending attempts to curtail the sale of property to Muslims in the areas where they are more in number, an attempt that has not yielded the desired outcome for them because of the socio-economic and religious realities of the metropolis.

The role of Pentecostal churches in inter-religious conflicts in Kaduna State is two-fold; some churches actively work towards peace and reconciliation, while others advertently and inadvertently contribute to conflict through unguided utterances during their services and in the course of public discourse (D. Nuga, Personal Communication, July 20, 2024). The churches in the former have actively engaged in peace-building initiatives which include the promoting of inter-faith dialogues where leaders from different religious backgrounds come together to discuss issues of mutual concern and to build understanding. They have also provided humanitarian aid and support to victims of conflicts regardless of their faith and advocated for the peaceful resolution of disputes through mediation and reconciliation efforts that prioritize forgiveness and

reconciliation among Christians and non-Christians (Barnabas, Personal Communication). Others have established peace committees within their congregations to act as mediators in local conflicts (Damina, Personal Communication).

However, churches in the latter category have fuelled religious intolerance through divisive rhetoric during political activities and teachings during their regular services, which are capable of inciting violence. They have also contributed to the spread of misinformation and propaganda, mostly through conspiratorial theories that focus on the much-talked-about Islamisation agenda (A. Morrison, Personal Communication, September 30, 2024), instead of looking to address the root causes of conflict, which are the political manipulation of religion and the contest for resource allocation.

## **6. Pentecostal Churches and Relations with Kaduna State Government**

Although Pentecostalism has shown its inclination to the politics and governance of Kaduna State since its inception, its involvement assumed a new dimension in the aftermath of the Sharia crisis in 2000. The fear of losing their freedom of religion should the plan to impose Sharia work out in Kaduna State was at the heart of their greater involvement in politics. For instance, while the leading Pentecostal organizations and churches between 1970 and 1999 mainly critiqued state structures and performance in relation to their constitutional roles, the 21<sup>st</sup> century witnessed a major shift in their engagements with the state. Their anti-state posture was partly premised on their longstanding belief that the leadership of Kaduna State, which has been dominated by the Muslim population, is against the growth of Christianity. To make matters worse, they lacked confidence in the CAN to fight off this scheme because of its perceived bromance with state officials against Pentecostal churches.

Consequently, they began to stabilize their relationships with the state to survive what had been a tense religious landscape. The stabilization agenda was achieved through unprecedented involvement in politics and governance, which they felt was the panacea to threats to their religious freedom. Their involvement also resulted from the conclusion that indigenous Christians within the state had displayed weakness, and could not confront the perceived challenges posed by reformist Islam (Bassey, Personal Communication).

As part of their strategies, members of their denominations were encouraged to register with major political parties and to contest for elective offices within the state and at the national level. Ordained pastors, were, however, advised to refrain from active politics to enable them to face the task of spiritual leadership (Bassey, Personal Communication.) The justification for the new

approach, which is at variance with their former position that sees involvement in politics as ungodly for believers was that only Christians, ‘the light of the world’, could make things work in the political sphere, dominated by ‘evil men’ (Bassey, Personal Communication). As a result, Pentecostal churches played major roles in the politics of the state and the nation at large by supporting candidates aligned with their interests. For instance, they supported the administration of Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007), who they believed had become a born-again Christian before his release from prison in 1998, and was in a better position to protect their religious freedom (O. Olutayo, Personal Communication, June 23, 2024). They also supported the administration of Governor Mohammed Ahmed Makarfi (1999-2007) who they considered fair to the Christian community, and the administrations of Governors Namadi Sambo (2007-2010 and Patrick Yakowa (2010-2012), on the same account.

The antagonistic posture towards the administration of Governor Nasir Ahmed El-Rufai was due to a consensus amongst Pentecostal leaders that he was a threat to the freedom they had fought very hard to preserve (Bassey; Olutayo, Personal Communication). Nevertheless, some Pentecostal leaders, especially ordained Bishops, had a series of meetings with El-Rufai on matters of security, inter-religious harmony, and the politics of the state (S. Ayila, Personal Communication, December 29, 2024). In 2019, the governor is said to have held several meetings with some church leaders to win their support for his Muslim-Muslim ticket (Ayila, Personal Communication). While some of these leaders supported the ticket, they were, however, unable to convince a substantial number of Christians to support it (Mbuk, Personal Communication).

Two reasons have been advanced for their inability. First, these leaders, mostly bishops, are considered fake by the majority of Christians in the metropolis because the bishopric office they occupy is not recognized, and believed to have been bought (Omoloye, Personal Communication). Moreover, the bodies that ordained them as bishops are unregistered, as does their affiliations which conferred on them honorary Ph.Ds. It is also thought that the bishopric office they occupy is for the financial gains that often accompany their deliberations with state officials (Omoloye, Personal Communication). Secondly, their efforts were undermined by the widely-held notion within the Christian community that El-Rufai had demonstrated his hatred for the Christian community by neglecting them in his construction of roads, which he concentrated in the Northern parts of the metropolis that is dominated by Muslims (Mbuk, Personal Communication).

Hence, Pentecostal churches have served as more than just places of worship in the metropolis; they have acted as community centers where socio-political matters are

discussed and addressed. Their perception as moral authorities with direct access to God by followers has translated into significant influence for them in the politics and governance of Kaduna State. Given their number of followers, their endorsements, and rejection/criticisms of politicians have swayed public opinion in the metropolis. Most importantly, the role of Pentecostal leaders in the mobilization of voters in election seasons cannot be over-emphasized in the light of their vast network of followers. This ability to rally support for specific candidates, or parties, has impacted election outcomes and explains why politicians from all the major parties within the state rally around them for votes (Barnabas, Personal Communication).

Therefore, Pentecostal churches' relationship with the Kaduna state government is characterized by a mixture of collaboration and tension. On one hand, these churches have complemented the government's efforts in social development programs and community initiatives. On the other hand, however, their activities, especially in a politically volatile environment, have been subjected to government scrutiny, leading to frustrations and tensions, especially when they cross the lines of their religious jurisdiction.

## 7. Conclusion

The article has shown that the exponential growth of Pentecostalism in the Kaduna Metropolis has engendered relationships with both religious and non-religious institutions, given the deep-seated community involvement trajectories of Pentecostal churches since their rise to the limelight. It reveals that the relationship between Pentecostal churches, other Christian denominations, and CAN was unfriendly in the early years of charismatic and Pentecostal Christianity in Kaduna due to differing theological stands and the scramble for space in the religious landscapes. It contends that the ensuing competition between the major Christian orders in the state-bred conflicts, cross-denominational influences, and later, tolerance and cooperation between them. As active religious and social institutions within Kaduna, the article argues that Pentecostal churches have contributed to, and are affected by inter-religious tensions. While these churches often play a role in promoting peace and social welfare, they have also been inadvertently drawn into conflicts due to some of their positions within the broader religious landscape, where competition between Muslims and Christians for political and social influence persists.

Furthermore, it observes that the relationship between Pentecostal churches and the Kaduna State Government has been characterized by both cooperation and tension, as the government seeks to balance the religious freedom of its citizens with the need to maintain social order and stability. Conflicts often arise due to perceptions amongst Pentecostals that the state seeks to curtail their expansion,

and in the course of time, Islamise the state. This underscores the need for greater interfaith dialogue, mutual understanding, and cooperation between religious groups and the Kaduna State Government towards mitigating religious conflicts and promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

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### Interviews

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Interview with Rev. Adekoya, 70+, Former PFN Chairman Kaduna South, Ungwan Boro Kaduna, June 10, 2024.

Interview with Aremu Adedeji, 70+, Retired Teacher, Karji Kaduna State, January 30, 2024.

Interview with E.A. Akintola, 70+, Pastor of Faith Dominion Kawo, Lafiya Road Kawo, April 12, 2023.

Interview with Anonymous, 60, A Catholic Priest, Mando Kaduna, June 3, 2024.

Interview with Bishop Samuel Ayila, 64, Lead Pastor Family Life Ministry, Ungwan Romi Sabo Kaduna, December 29, 2024.

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Interview with David Nuga, 64, Pastor, Life Changers Family Church Kubwa Abuja, Mando Kaduna, July 20, 2023.

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