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**Intra-African Pentecostalism and the Dynamics of Power: The Living Faith
Church worldwide (Winners' Chapel) in Cameroon, 1996-2016.**

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**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
School of Divinity,
The University of Edinburgh**

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Abstract

The embeddedness of Pentecostal/Charismatic tenets within contemporary global frameworks of transnational power reveals the ability of religion to shape the sociocultural and spiritual experiences of people on the move from one place to another. For this reason, sociologists of religion and scholars of World Christianity have noted the rapid missionary expansion of African Pentecostal/Charismatic movements to the northern hemisphere. Some have even referred to the missionary work of non-western forms of Christianity in the western world as the ‘Southernisation of European Christianity’. But if the aggressive strategies adopted by African Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in the western diaspora are intended to reawaken Christianity in Europe, what then is the motivation for intra-African Pentecostal/Charismatic movements in traversing national boundaries, with their distinctive version of the Christian faith, making Africa a theatre in which Christian missionaries are both sent and received? This thesis examines the intra-African missionary praxis of a highly influential Nigerian Pentecostal/Charismatic church, the Winners’ Chapel, and its accompanying power dynamics in Cameroon from 1996 to 2016. Using a qualitative research approach, the study examines the character of transnational Pentecostal/Charismatic movements in Africa, using Winners’ Chapel in Cameroon as a case study.

After an investigation of the emergence of the church, the study examines the various strategies used to achieve and maintain control of the mother church in Nigeria over its daughter church in Cameroon, such as the deployment of Nigerian missionaries, the use of Nigerian-defined Winners’ Chapel tenets in Cameroon, the place of sermons and testimonies, and the role of the media. The thesis studies the conflicts of loyalty and contestations that emerge between Nigerian Winners’ Chapel

missionaries to Cameroon and their Cameroonian colleagues in Cameroon. It concludes with an assessment of how far Winners' Chapel can be said to contribute to the provision of social capital and empowerment in Cameroon.

The findings in this study provide a significant and original contribution to the understanding of how power dynamics can operate within complex relationships between transnational Pentecostal/Charismatic actors (missionaries), and their receiving countries colleagues in the continent of Africa. It also contributes to the literature on African Pentecostalism but offers fresh insights into the encounters, contestations, and resistance that emerge between 'founder-owners' and recruited workers of intra-African Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements. By appropriating international relations concepts such as Joseph Nye's ideas of 'soft power' and concepts in the sociology of religion such as Peggy Levitt's 'remittances', popularised by Afe Adogame, the study potentially unveils the nexus between international relations, the sociology of religion and development within Pentecostalist transnational discourses in Africa.

DECLARATION

I confirm that this work submitted for assessment is my own and expressed in my words. Any uses made within it of works of other authors in any form (e.g. quotation, ideas, figures, text and tables) are properly acknowledged at their point of use. A list of the references employed is included.

Signed

Date.....

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Amos Chewachong

22/05/17

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my Wife, Florence Ndum Amah Epse Chewachong and our four beautiful children: Larry-Craig, Talitha-Zerah Amosons, Reuel-Gilead and Arielle-Amora Amosons. You have been kind enough to allow me escape some of my duties as husband and father in order to pursue this study.

ABBREVIATIONS

APCCs: African Pentecostal Charismatic Churches

CoP: Church of Pentecost

CNPS: Caisse Nationale de Prevoyance Social

DOMI: David Oyedepo Ministries International

DPH: Dominion Publishing House

CMFI: Christian Missionary Fellowship International

AGIP: Africa Gospel Invasion Programme

LFCW: Living Faith Church Worldwide

LFCWOC: Living Faith World Outreach Centre

PCC: Presbyterian Church in Cameroon

PFM: Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria

RCCG: Redeemed Christian of God

SNEC: The National Water Supply Company of Cameroon

WCC: World Council of Churches

WOFBI: Word of Faith Bible Institute

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CHAPTER ONE

An Introductory Chapter: Setting the Research Context

1.1. Introduction

This chapter is aimed at examining the subject, object and context of the research, and defines the problem which the study seeks to address. It also states the research questions and tries to justify why the study is important in the light of current trends in religious transnationalism, in the intra-African perspective. The main objectives of the study, and a chapter outline conclude the chapter.

Firstly, a brief overview of Pentecostal mission and Nigerian intra-African Pentecostal movements is examined as the subject of investigation. Secondly, the object of study, the Winners' Chapel, Nigeria, is briefly introduced and the socio-political/religious demography of Cameroon examined in order to paint a picture of the research context. The emergence of Pentecostalism in Cameroon concludes this section. In the third section, the problem of the research is stated. Sections four, five and six, respectively handle the research questions, a justification for the study, and the objectives and aims.

1.2. Pentecostal Mission and Nigerian intra-African Pentecostal movements

Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches (henceforth APCCs) are seemingly a recent addition to the world's religious tapestry spanning a period of existence of just over a century.¹ However, they have been regarded as pivotal in world missions, representing perhaps a quarter of the world's Christians with three quarters of them living in the southern hemisphere. Barrett and Johnson's startling statistics of 1,140

¹ Allan Anderson, 'Towards a Missiology for the Majority World', *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 8, no. 1 (2005): 29.

million Pentecostal Christians in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific, accounting for 61% of the world's Christians, compared with 39% of Christians inhabiting the two northern continents (including Russia), are evidence of Christianity's decline in the western world in the twentieth century. It has therefore been estimated that by 2025, 69% of the world's Christians will live in the South, while 31% will occupy the northern hemisphere.²

However, the new Christian resurgence in Africa seems to be a result of new forms of Christian movements and not necessarily the efforts of mission historic churches. Andrew F. Walls aptly argues that the shift in Christian predominance from the North to the South has not been occasioned by historic mission churches but, rather, by APCCs,³ often with a penchant for evangelism and mission. Thus, while the Redeemed Christian Church of God (henceforth RCCG) strategically pledges to build churches within five minutes' walking distance in every city and town of developing countries and five minutes' driving distance in every city and town of developed countries, in order to claim every nation for Christ,⁴ the Living Faith Church Worldwide aka Winners' Chapel International (henceforth Winners' Chapel) promises to develop and uplift mankind by 'stirring up the God-given potentials embedded in people of all races and nations...to liberate the entire world from all oppressions of the enemy both spiritual and physical through the teachings and

² David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson 2002, 'Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 2002', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 26, no. 1 (January 2002): 23. Also see Johnson M. Todd, Gina A. Zurlo, Albert W. Hickman, and Peter F. Crossing, 'Christianity 2017: Five Hundred Years of Protestant Christianity', *International Bulletin of Mission Research* (January 2017): available at: <http://www.gordonconwell.edu/ockenga/research/documents/StatusofGlobalChristianity2017>: (Accessed 12/01/17).

³ Andrew F. Walls, 'Of Ivory Towers and Ashrams: Some reflections on theological scholarship in Africa', *Journal of African Christian Thought* 3, no. 1 (June 2000): 1.

⁴ The Redeemed Christian Church of God, 'Mission and Vision', available at: <http://rccg.org/who-we-are/mission-and-vision/?v=79cba1185463>: (Accessed 03/04/17).

preaching of the word of faith...'⁵ These churches are therefore negotiating religious space in local and transnational contexts in order to achieve their set goals. Karla Poewe argues that Pentecostalism is a 'transcultural, transnational and polycentric' pattern of Christianity,⁶ which, according to Roswith Gerloff, challenges traditional, often ethnocentric and monocultural ways of being church.⁷ Gerloff is probably implying that historic mission churches often lack the initiative to move beyond their immediate contexts of establishment, whereas APCCs continuously cross territorial boundaries. Perhaps in order to highlight these developments, Matthews Ojo has explicated the nature, dynamics and networks of APCCs in Africa, as part of African initiatives in Christian missions and the internationalisation of African Christianity.⁸ He argues that religious networking seems strategic for APCCs in Africa in their expansionist ambitions and attempts to operate within a global dimension. Consequently, their missionary enterprises clearly illustrate the generative capacity of the charismatic movements, providing impetus for the contextualisation of African Christianity.⁹ Winners' Chapel is one of those APCCs which is significantly proliferating in local and global contexts. Its international headquarters is in Nigeria while Douala is one of its national headquarters from where it is expanding to other regions in Cameroon through the combined efforts of Nigerian missionaries and Cameroonian indigenous pastors of the church. This study investigates the missionary motivations/strategies and power dynamics of a highly influential

⁵ Living Faith Church Worldwide, 'About Winner's Chapel', available at:

<https://www.winnerschapelenugu.org/about-winners-chapel/>: (Accessed 03/04/17).

⁶ Karla Poewe, *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1994), 1-2.

⁷ Roswith Gerloff, 'Churches of the Spirit: The Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement and Africa's Contribution to the Renewal of Christianity', in Afe Adogame, Roswith Gerloff and Klaus Hock (eds.) *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora: The Appropriation of a Scattered Heritage* (London: A & C Black), 2008, 208-220.

⁸ Matthews Ojo, 'Transnational Religious Networks and Indigenous Pentecostal Missionary Enterprises in the West African Coastal Region', in Afe Adogame, Roswith Gerloff and Klaus Hock, *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora* (London: A & C Black, 2008), 167-180.

⁹ Ojo, 'Transnational Religious Networks', 167-180.

Nigerian Pentecostal Charismatic Church, Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. If there is one reality that scholars contend with within the African Pentecostalist discourse, it is the fact that Nigeria stands out as a hub of Pentecostalism in the African continent. It may not be possible to illustrate this reality statistically with any accuracy, but according to *The World Christian Database*, there are approximately 3.9 million Pentecostal adherents in Nigeria, ranking third in the world after Brazil, with 24 million, and the United States, with 6 million.¹⁰ Most recent projections reveal that by 2020 the countries with the most renewalists will likely be Brazil, the United States, China, and Nigeria.¹¹ Cameroon has a mere 800,000 Pentecostal membership.¹² Nigerian Pentecostal groups are therefore contributing significantly in cross-border mission both in the African continent and elsewhere.

Scholarship on the transnationalisation of African Pentecostal Charismatic Churches to the northern hemisphere in what could be described as the South-North paradigm is significantly burgeoning,¹³ but transnational Pentecostalism within the African continent is relatively underdeveloped. It is within the context of this lacuna that my research is intended to contribute a more nuanced study of African Pentecostalism and the dynamics of power within the African continent.

¹⁰ Ethan Cole, 'Nigerian Pentecostalism Thriving on Miracles, Prosperity Promises' in *The Christian Post*, September 16, 2007: available at: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/nigerian-pentecostalism-thriving-on-miracles-prosperity-promises/> (Accessed 03/04/17).

¹¹ Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, Centre for the Study of Global Christianity, 'Christianity in its Global Context, 1970-2020': *Society, Religion, and Mission* (June 2013), available at: <http://www.gordonconwell.edu/ockenga/research/documents/2ChristianityinitsGlobalContext.pdf>: (Accessed 12/01/17).

¹² Garrett Haley, Christian News: Christian News Network, 'Cameroon Government Shuts Down Over 50 Pentecostal Churches, Plans to Shutter 100 Total', 16th August 2013, available at: <http://christiannews.net/2013/08/16/cameroon-government-shuts-down-over-50-pentecostal-churches-plans-to-shutter-100-total/>: (Accessed 05/04/2017).

¹³ Some notable works include: Ogbu Kalu, 2000, 2003; Afe Adogame, 2003, 2004, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013; Ezra Chitando, 2005; Moses Biney, 2007; Jacob Olupona, 2007, 2011.

APCCs have been noted for their aggressive evangelistic strategies and their ability to penetrate new geo-cultural territories in Africa and elsewhere. These groups perceive themselves in the western world as agents of re-evangelisation in continents where secularism has arguably banished religion to the fringes of society, while in Africa they claim to have been called by God to challenge what Ogbu Kalu described as ‘powerless Christianity’ in historic mission churches, which had let loose, and failed to conquer, the evil spiritual forces that characterised their communities.¹⁴ Nigerian APCCs are leading lights in both perspectives of intercontinental and intra-African Pentecostalism. According to Matthews Ojo, Nigerian APCCs were the ‘largest and most active in the continent of Africa in the 1990s and they have since fostered the emergence of similar movements in other countries’.¹⁵ Ojo seems to have been preoccupied with the magnitude and impact of Nigerian APCCs in terms of numbers and activity in the continent, but Kalu provided the reasons for their intra-continental influence by arguing that an emphasis on re-evangelising Africa based on God’s revelations about the African continent was crucial for the Nigerian Pentecostal missionary enterprise in the 1990s. The other two dimensions were an ‘intensified mission to the Muslims and unreached people, and a strategy of manpower training through engagement in the mission fields’.¹⁶ There is little wonder then that in Africa most APCCs existing in Cameroon, for example, come from Nigeria.

¹⁴ Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 126.

¹⁵ Ojo, ‘Transnational Religious Networks’, 168.

¹⁶ Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 131.

The popularisation of the concept of ‘reverse mission’ and its accompanying interpretations in the western world is understandable in the context of such transnational dynamics by APCCs with their claim to ‘remaking Europe in the image of Christ’. That is why Afe Adogame has argued that the missionary strategy by churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America of (re-) evangelising the ‘West’ was aimed at re-Christianising Europe and North America.¹⁷ One might argue that APCCs would send out missionaries to plant churches in the West to stem the tide of apostasy and secularism. However, sociologists of religion and scholars of World Christianity need to wonder about the concept of intra-African Pentecostalism and try to examine why missionaries criss-cross the continent of Africa where Christianity is thought to be burgeoning as a whole. Is this a reversal of the reverse mission or the reverse mission in reverse? Or is it an extension of APCCs’ power from elsewhere in Africa in order to capture new territories and wield their influence and spiritual power? This study aims to examine the dynamics of power in intra-African Pentecostalism.

1.3. Object of the Study and its Context

The object of this study is the Living Faith Church Worldwide (LFCW) aka Winners’ Chapel International, in Cameroon. The church is a product of the vision of David Oyedepo who claims to have received a mandate from God to save mankind from suffering and pain. In Nigeria, the church is registered as Living Faith Church Worldwide (LFCW) with the corporate Affairs Commission,¹⁸ but it is popularly

¹⁷ Afe Adogame, ‘Reverse Mission: Europe-a Prodigal Continent?’ In *Edinburgh 2010 Centenary of the 1910 World Missionary Conference*, 2010.

¹⁸ The Corporate Affairs Commission is the Nigerian government agency responsible for the registration of companies and non-profit Organisations.

known as Winners' Chapel.¹⁹ In Cameroon, the church is not registered with the government but the application for registration, which is currently being processed, gives the church's name as, 'World Mission Agency Inc' in Cameroon. Some official documents of the church have two names: 'World Mission Agency Inc' and Winners' Chapel International, Cameroon.²⁰ This difference in nomenclature between the church in Nigeria and the one in Cameroon has caused some of the Cameroonian pastors working with the church in Cameroon to suggest that there is no Winners' Chapel in Cameroon.²¹ However, the church is popularly called Winners' Chapel in Cameroon and the name Winners' Chapel visibly conveys the philosophy of action and theology of the LFCW as being those of a church primarily concerned with the success and empowerment of its members. The founder of the LFCW prefers his organisation to be known and called LFCW.²² The LFCW is one branch of David Oyedepo Ministries International (DOMI). The others are: The African Gospel Invasion Programme (AGIP), The Dominion Publishing House (DPH), Faith Academy, Covenant University, Gilead Medical Centre and the Word of Faith Bible Institute (WOFBI).²³ This study is primarily concerned with the study of the Living Faith Church Worldwide of the DOMI conglomerate in Cameroon. The name Winners' Chapel would be used in the study because that is how the church is designated in Cameroon.

¹⁹ Selome Kuponu, 'The Living Faith Church (Winners' Chapel), Nigeria: Pentecostalism, Prosperity Gospel and Social Change in Nigeria' (PhD diss., University of Bayreuth, 2007), 1.

²⁰ Clement Simon Mbambad, Pasteur Doyen A La World Mission Agency INC. AKA Winners' Chapel International, 'Exercice Illegale et non-respect de la Legislation Camerounaise par La Congregation Religieuse World Mission Agency INC-Winners' Chapel International au Cameroun'. Letter addressed to the President of the Republic of Cameroon, dated 3rd September 2014.

²¹ Pastor Peter, Interview (02/02/16), Douala.

²² Kuponu, 'The Living Faith Church', 18.

²³ David Oyedepo, 'Faith Tabernacle Canaanland Ota: Living Faith Church Worldwide A.K.A Winners' Chapel International, World Headquarters', available at: <http://www.davidoyedepoministries.org/aboutus/>: (Accessed 05/04/17).

An understanding of the emergence and power dynamics of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon is only possible when grounded in an examination of the vision and mission of its founder who is the main architect of the unfolding dynamics of the church from its inception.²⁴ This vision and mission have been summarised by Oyedepo in a monograph entitled *The Mandate: Operational Manual, Living Faith Church Worldwide aka Winners Chapel International*.²⁵ This book records revelations which Oyedepo claims to continually receive from God, instructing and directing him on how to manage and organise various aspects of his church organisation. According to Oyedepo, the beginning of Winners' Chapel was never a human conception but a divine mandate which resulted from an 18-hour encounter with the Lord on 2 May 1982. In that encounter, God instructed Oyedepo to liberate the world from all oppressions of the Devil through the preaching of the word of faith.²⁶ This mandate is reproduced both inside and outside all Winners' Chapel churches in Cameroon. For this reason, when asked about the establishment of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon, pioneer members, pastors and other leaders of the church refer to the 'Liberation Mandate'. According to the mandate, the encounter between David Oyedepo and God provided a vision for his mission in which God revealed the plight of humanity as fraught with all kinds of perplexities. It also envisaged the Bishop as responsible for resolving the situation through the preaching of the word of faith in local and global contexts. The global picture of his ministry is implied in the name Winners' chapel International and there is no doubt that, Oyedepo perceives his mission as one in which his spiritual power needs to be appropriately transmitted from Nigeria to other places where he has established

²⁴ Kuponu, 'The Living Faith Church', 1.

²⁵ David Oyedepo, *The Mandate: Operational Manual, Living Faith Church Worldwide aka Winners Chapel International* (Lagos, Nigeria: Dominion Publishing House, 2012).

²⁶ Ibid, 15.

churches, in order to maintain and sustain the mandate and thus fulfil the responsibility which God bestowed on him. This may explain why the Bishop has historically used Nigerian missionaries to lead Winners' Chapel churches beyond Nigeria, possibly to provide the temporal power that is necessary to transmit and sustain his spiritual power. For example, Matthews Ojo has suggested that by the close of the 1990s, a branch of Winners' Chapel had been established in the capital cities of about thirty African countries, with Nigerian pastors posted from Lagos as leaders of these churches.²⁷ And Kuponu significantly comments that 'the commission' or 'mandate' of Oyedepo is usually placed strategically in the context of divine authorisation for mission just as Jesus' baptism by John formed the commencement of Jesus' public ministry.²⁸

Winners' Chapel prototypically represents the new mega-churches of the APCC type, which occupy diverse spaces in local and global contexts. It has a dominant social visibility through a network of churches in over 300 cities and towns spread across 36 states and the Federal Capital territory of Nigeria. It has also established congregations in more than 35 other countries,²⁹ including Cameroon where the church continues to wield considerable influence from Nigeria. The history of the emergence, spread and power dynamics of Winners' Chapel in Nigeria and across international boundaries illustrates what André Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani refer to as 'the development of an increasingly complex web of transnational Pentecostal networks, where flows of people, money, ideas, and images circulate with growing speed and intensity defying all attempts to pin them down to any

²⁷ Matthews Ojo, 'Nigerian Pentecostalism and Transnational Religious Networks in West African Coastal Regions' in Laurent Fourchard, André Mary et René Otayek (eds.) *Entreprises Religieuses Transnationales en Afrique de L' Ouest* (Nigeria: Infra-Ibadan, 2005), 405.

²⁸ Kuponu, 27.

²⁹ Ibid.

particular source or destination'.³⁰ Nevertheless, the exportation of Nigerian-founded Pentecostal churches to other countries and constituencies remains remarkable. For example, Olufunke Adeboye examined the transnational networks of the RCCG in Ghana and Benin.³¹ He argues that these networks have been facilitated by religious convocations organised by the RCCG international headquarters in Nigeria, the transmission of policies, sermons and other information through print and electronic media and the appointment of coordinators who represent the leadership of the church and oversee the church's activities in these foreign countries.³² Enoch Adeboye, the general overseer of the RCCG, has therefore postulated that 'since one in five Africans is a Nigerian, perhaps God is raising up an army to evangelise all of Africa from here'.³³ Nigerian missionaries are presently going beyond Africa to plant and grow large churches to an extent that no one ever imagined possible. Matthews Ojo has justified this on the grounds that 'independent Pentecostal and Charismatic movements continue to spread because they are pragmatic in their approach to social and religious issues, and are also responding to the existential needs of Africans within the contemporary situations of socio-political disequilibrium'.³⁴ However, in one respect, we need to recognise that the character of transnational Pentecostalism is underpinned by the obligation of the average Pentecostal to preach the gospel to people of all races and nations.³⁵

³⁰ André Corten and Ruth Marshall Fratani (eds.) *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America* (London: Hurst, 2001), 1.

³¹ Olufunke Adeboye, 'Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa: The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Nigeria' in Laurent Fourchard André Mary et René Otayek (eds.) *Entreprises Religieuses Transnationales en Afrique de L' Ouest* (Nigeria: Infra-Ibadan, 2005), 453.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ayuk Ayuk A, 'Portrait of a Nigerian Pentecostal Missionary', *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 8, no. 1 (2005): 121, Quoting Grady Lee, 'Nigeria's Miracle', *Charisma and Christian Life* (2002): 38-49.

³⁴ Ojo, 'Transnational Religious Networks', 168.

³⁵ Adebayo Olufunke, 'Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa: The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Nigeria', in *Entreprises Religieuses Transnationales en Afrique de L' Ouest* (INFRA-IBADAN: KARTHALA, 2005), 439.

At the beginning of my research in 2013, I described the current situation of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon as follows. The Church migrated into Cameroon from Nigeria in 1996 through missionaries who were functioning under the auspices of the Church's AGIP.³⁶ (AGIP is a missionary structure of Winners' Chapel, which is designed to facilitate the missionary task of the Church, to liberate Africa and the world from satanic oppression through the preaching of the 'Word of Faith.'³⁷ It has been instrumental in establishing Winners' Chapel branches, especially in the continent of Africa). In Cameroon, Winners' Chapel first settled in Douala from where it spread to Buea, Bamenda, and Yaoundé, and then later to Ngaoundéré, Garoua and Maroua. The national headquarters of the church is in Douala and Ngaoundéré serves as its headquarters in the three northern regions of Cameroon that are largely dominated by Muslims. There are approximately 130 assemblies of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon, 80 in the Francophone regions, 44 in the Anglophone regions and 6 in the northern regions, constituting a total membership of more than 15,000. The church also boasts more than 100 resident pastors, most of whom are Cameroonians, serving the various local assemblies in the country.³⁸

³⁶ This information has been gathered through email and telephone exchanges, with Pastor Ntam of Winners' Chapel Buea Assembly in Cameroon, March 2014.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid; Deaconess Mercy Wah, Interview (17/11/14), Douala.

1.3.1. The Socio-Political/Religious Demography of Cameroon: An Overview

Cameroon is a Central African country bounded by Nigeria, Chad, Central African Republic, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Congo Brazzaville and the Gulf of Guinea.³⁹

Cameroon is multilingual, comprising about 247 indigenous languages, one lingua franca (Cameroon pidgin English) and two official languages (French and English).⁴⁰

The name Cameroon is a derivative of the Portuguese word *Camarão*, meaning ‘prawn’. Its origin is traced to 16th-century Portuguese explorers who settled on the banks of the River Wouri in Douala during their exploits and were so impressed by the abundance of prawns in the river that they were motivated to name it *Rio dos camaroes*, ‘river of prawns’.⁴¹

The scramble in Cameroon by the Portuguese and other western powers for the control and exploitation of the country lasted for about four centuries, and was followed by the organisation of the slave trade by the Dutch in the coastal regions during the 17th and 18th centuries. In the 19th century, the French also organised a slave trade in the coastal regions, but a decisive treaty signed in 1884 between the pre-eminent chiefs of the coastal area of Douala and the Germans led to the ousting of the French and British from Cameroon.⁴² Cameroon, therefore, remained under German control as one of its colonies from 1884 to 1916, when a combined British and French expeditionary force defeated the German forces in the country during the First World War. Cameroon was then divided by the victors into two unequal parts,

³⁹ Joseph Nsom, ‘Cameroon: Cameroon: A Francophone Bilingual Country’, available at: <http://www.camer.be/31801/30:27/cameroun-cameroon-a-francophone-bilingual-country-.html>: (Accessed 04/06/15).

⁴⁰ George Echu, ‘The Language Question in Cameroon’, *Linguistik Online* Yaounde: Bloomington 18, no. 1 (2004), available at: http://www.linguistik-online.com/18_04/echu.html: (Accessed 13/02/17).

⁴¹ John F. Ludovic Lado, *Catholic Pentecostalism and the Paradoxes of Africanisation: Processes of Localisation in a Catholic Charismatic Movement in Cameroon* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 9.

⁴² *Ibid*, 10.

with the British taking control of about a quarter, and the French three-quarters.⁴³ The French and English portions of Cameroon were reunified as two federated states in 1961 following a plebiscite.⁴⁴ There are 24 major African language groups in Cameroon. However, the country hosts about 250 ethnic groups, speaking about 250 different languages.⁴⁵ Ludovic Lado has noted that one of the obvious consequences of this diversity in languages in Cameroon is that in multi-ethnic urban cities such as Bamenda, Douala, Yaoundé and Buea, English and French, including Pidgin English, are the main languages of communication across ethnic barriers.⁴⁶ According to recent estimates of Index Mundi, Cameroon has a total land surface area of about 9,475,440 km² and a population of 24,360,803.⁴⁷

The colonial history of Cameroon is a complex interweaving of complacency, exploitation, slavery, war, and collusion with, and the eventual ousting of, foreign powers. Portugal may have been influential in naming Cameroon, but the name was soon manipulated to reflect the two regions of which the country is constituted. The Francophone region would use 'Cameroun' and the Anglophone region would use 'Cameroon'. Germany controlled the country for over three decades from 1884 to 1916 after colluding with some prominent Cameroonian chiefs of the coastal regions to oust the British and the French from the country. But the combined military effort of the French and English forces seemed to have been the last struggle by foreign powers to subject Cameroon to colonial rule. This is evident from the fact that, after the French and English had defeated the Germans in the First World War, the

⁴³ Charles Fombad, 'State, Religion, and Law in Cameroon: Regulatory Control, Tension, and Accommodation', *Journal of Church and State* 57, no. 1 (2013): 54.

⁴⁴ Joseph Nsom, 'CAMEROUN: Cameroon: A Francophone Bilingual Country', available at: <http://www.camer.be/31801/30:27/cameroun-cameroon-a-francophone-bilingual-country-.html>: (Accessed 04/06/15).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Lado, *Catholic Pentecostalism*, 6.

⁴⁷ Index Mundi, 'Cameroon Demographics Profile', available at: http://www.indexmundi.com/cameroon/demographics_profile.html: (Accessed 05/0/17).

territory was divided between the two latter-named countries while the former unleashed its grip on Cameroon unrecognised. Cameroon is the only African country that was colonised by three European countries—Germany, England and France—and remains to this day one of only two bilingual countries speaking English and French as official languages (the other being Canada).⁴⁸ This rather tumultuous history, which has led to the emergence of Cameroon as a bilingual country, with two separate portions under one rule, has produced what one could arguably call fragments of two mutually suspicious areas in the same nation-state, which continue to exist in the 21st century. In 2017 sustained strike action by the two Anglophone regions of Cameroon (North and Southwest Regions) against the French dominant government of the country provided clear evidence of the continuing tensions.⁴⁹

After the independence and reunification of the former British and French parts of Cameroon in 1961, the country emerged as a highly complex heterogeneous nation with a wide diversity of ethnic groups, languages, culture, and religion.⁵⁰ 69 per cent of the population are Christians, 21 per cent are Muslims and the other 6 per cent adhere to indigenous religious beliefs.⁵¹ Although the various religions tend to be separated geographically, with Christians predominantly occupying the South of the country and Muslims the northern regions, Christians and Muslims coexist in urban areas, as evidenced by the close proximity in which churches and mosques are

⁴⁸ Peter Angwafo Tse, *Cameroon's Predicaments* (Langaa: RPCIG, 2014), 160.

⁴⁹ ALJAZEERA, 'Cameroon Teachers, Lawyers strikes in Battle for English: Anglophones say French is being imposed in Schools and Court Rooms in English Speaking Regions', available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/cameroon-teachers-lawyers-strike-english-161205095929616.html>: (Accessed 13/02/17).

⁵⁰ Fombad, 'State, Religion and Law in Cameroon', 1.

⁵¹ United States Department of State, *2013 Report on International Religious Freedom - Cameroon*, 28 July 2014, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53d9079a14.html>: (Accessed 20/08/15).

frequently found. The followers of the indigenous religions reside predominantly in rural areas throughout Cameroon.⁵²

Before the Portuguese pioneers and early missionaries reached sub-Saharan Africa during the 1880s, African indigenous religions and Islam were the two predominant religions in the country. The indigenous religions were stronger than the Islamic influence because the former were an integral part of the culture and traditions of the people as they had been inherited from their forefathers.⁵³ By the time of the German conquest in the late 1880s, most of northern Cameroon was under Muslim influence and organised into areas called *lamidats*, which were administered by religious leaders known as *lamidos*.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the southern parts of Cameroon were predominantly Christian. Cameroon, therefore, was divided into two religious zones in which Islam was making inroads in the North and Christianity in the South. However, the expansionist tendencies of both religions could not be confined within these geographical areas.⁵⁵ This religious demography of Cameroon is a reflection of its political history, starting with indigenous ethnic rule and progressing through German, French, and British colonisation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries before independence was finally achieved in 1961.⁵⁶ Cameroon is therefore a religiously plural nation with three main religious groups: Christianity, Islam and African indigenous religions. Each of the three main religious traditions is inherently diverse with, for example, the Christian population further divided into 38 per cent Roman Catholic, 26 per cent Protestant, and 4 per cent belonging to other Christian denominations, including the Jehovah's Witnesses and Eastern Orthodox

⁵² Fombad, 'State, Religion and Law in Cameroon', 1.

⁵³ Ibid, 2.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 3.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 2-4.

⁵⁶ The Institute on Religion and Public Policy, available at:

http://www.justice.gov/eoir/vll/country/Religion_Public_policy/Cameroon%20Immigration%20Report: (Accessed, 28/03/2014).

(who make up less than 1 per cent of the total).⁵⁷ Matthews Ojo traced an indigenous initiative in Cameroonian Christianity from 1959 when he found that one Samuel Obaker, a schoolteacher and the son of a Presbyterian pastor, together with a group of revivalists established a number of small non-denominational Pentecostal groups in Edea, Douala, and Yaoundé.⁵⁸ According to Ojo, the operation of these African Independent Charismatic Churches in the form of non-denominational groups led to their rapid spread and the emergence of many charismatic leaders.⁵⁹

Alfred Saker of the Baptist Missionary Society, who was accompanied by some West Indian Baptist preachers, mainly from Jamaica, introduced Christianity to Cameroon in 1844. In 1858, Saker bought a piece of land from a local king in Bimbia and founded Victoria, which is now Limbe. He later ordained Joseph Merrick, a charismatic Jamaican leader who performed a brief but outstanding work of evangelisation in Cameroon and thereby earned the title of ‘founder of Christianity in Cameroon’.⁶⁰ Merrick had earlier travelled to London in order to encourage British Baptists to support the work in Africa, and the two Baptist branches soon coordinated their efforts in Cameroon.⁶¹ Another outstanding Jamaican missionary supported by the London Baptist Mission was Joseph Jackson Fuller, who worked with Merrick and Saker. In 1866 Saker ordained the first ever-Cameroonian pastor, George Nkwe, a native Bamelike. The missionary group that came immediately after the Baptists were the American Presbyterians who, together

⁵⁷ United States Department of State, *2013 Report on International Religious Freedom - Cameroon*, 28 July 2014, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53d9079a14.html>: (Accessed 13/02/2017).

⁵⁸ Matthews Ojo, ‘Nigerian Pentecostalism and Transnational Religious Networks in West African Coastal Regions’ in Fourchard Laurent, Mary Andre and Otayek Rene (Eds.) *Entreprises Religieuses Transnationales en Afrique de L'Ouest*, (Ibadan, IFRA; Paris: Karthala, 2005), 406.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Christopher Steed and Bengt Sundkler, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 261.

⁶¹ Jean-Paul Messina and Jaap Van Slageren, *Histoire du Christianisme au Cameroun: Des Origine à nos jour* (Paris: Karthala, 2005), 27-31.

with the Baptists, planted the first seeds of Christianity in Cameroon.⁶² But after Cameroon came under the sovereignty of German rule in 1884, these British missionaries were forced to leave the country and a new mission field was opened for German Catholic missionaries.⁶³ However, after the defeat of the Germans in the First World War, Cameroon was divided into two unequal parts and placed under a League of Nations mandate. The French took control of three quarters of the country that today makes up the eight Francophone regions, and the British received the much smaller part, which today makes up the two Anglophone regions of Cameroon.⁶⁴ The Paris Evangelical Missionary Society consequently took over the work of the Baptist Mission in the Francophone regions. The main Protestant bodies in Cameroon, comprising of, Eglise Evangelique du Cameroun (EEC), Union des Eglises Baptistes du Cameroun (UEBC), Eglise Baptiste Camerounaise (EBC), Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC), and the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) trace their origin to this mixed history.⁶⁵ It was only in October 1890 that the first group of Roman Catholic missionaries arrived in Cameroon.⁶⁶ Matthews Ojo has commented that the religious environment of Cameroon is multifaceted because of the complex cultural, socio-economic and political configurations of the country, and from the colonial legacies of the Germans, the English and the French in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁶⁷

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid, 3.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Werner Keller, *The History of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon* (Victoria, Radio and Literature Department: Presbyterian Church of West Cameroon, 1969), 1-15.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Matthews Ojo, 'Nigerian Pentecostalism and Transnational Religious Networks', 395.

1.3.2. The Emergence of Pentecostalism in Cameroon

Pentecostalism in Cameroon dates back to the 1940s and was introduced by classical Pentecostal groups with origins in Europe working through missionaries from Nigeria. The first Pentecostal Church to be established was the Apostolic Church of British origin, which was introduced from Nigeria in the late 1940s by I. O. Oyoyo, a Nigerian missionary. For many years the Church was only present in the Anglophone part of the country, but after the Pentecostal boom following the democratisation process of the early 1990s, the church became a national church with congregations throughout the country.⁶⁸ The Full Gospel Mission was the second Pentecostal church to be introduced to Cameroon. Its creation was pioneered by Werner Knorr, a German missionary, who was originally sent to Nigeria but who, in the late 1950s, migrated to Cameroon and with the help of his Nigerian assistants established the first Full Gospel Mission church in Mutengene in 1961.⁶⁹ The church gained recognition in 1969 and has since spread to the ten regions of Cameroon. The Full Gospel Mission is the largest Pentecostal Church in Cameroon.⁷⁰ Its Congregations have also been established in Chad and Central African Republic.⁷¹ One of the first Pentecostal churches to be established without a foreign missionary initiative was the *Vraie Eglise de Dieu*, which was started by Nestor Toukea in 1959. In the mid-1990s the church claimed to have more than 200 congregations in Cameroon, 16 in Chad, and 10 in the Central African Republic.⁷²

The Pentecostal churches that have been mentioned so far are the classical groups, which are often connected to the ‘holiness’ tradition, which has its roots in

⁶⁸ Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: its public role* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998), 289.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 289-290; Robert Mbe Akoko, ‘Ask and You Shall be Given’: *Pentecostalism and the Economic Crisis in Cameroon* (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2007), 68.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Gifford, *African Christianity*, 289-290; Akoko, ‘Ask and You shall be Given’, 290.

European missions. Their major tenet was a personal ethic as close as possible to the biblical ideal. The ways of the world were to be avoided, and in both personal behaviour and dress modesty was to be promoted. With the Pentecostal ferment from the 1990s, these theological ideas have been seriously challenged by the neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic movements or APCCs which preach messages of prosperity, health and wealth to their adherents. This transition from African indigenous and classical Pentecostal to APCCs as a new focus for empirical study has been well articulated by Birgit Meyer. Paraphrasing Ruth Marshall-Fratani,⁷³ Meyer comments that:

Nothing can best evoke what is at stake than the salience of the contrast between the familiar image of African prophets from Zionist, Nazarite or Aladura churches, dressed in white gowns, carrying crosses and going to pray in the bush, and the flamboyant leaders of new mega churches who dress in the latest (African) fashion, drive nothing less than a Mercedes Benz participate in the global Pentecostal jet set, broadcast their messages through flashy TV and Radio programs and preach the prosperity gospel to their deprived and hitherto-hopeless born again followers at home and in the Diaspora.⁷⁴

Although it would be too simplistic to assume that APCCs simply replaced indigenous and classical Pentecostal churches, the emergence of these new movements suggests that the African appropriation of Christianity, albeit of a Pentecostal variety, has entered a new phase within the sociology of religion and world Christianity. For this reason Robert Akoko⁷⁵ has described recent changes within the Full Gospel Mission, the Roman Catholic, and the Presbyterian Churches in the Anglophone parts of Cameroon in order to highlight some of the emerging trends within Pentecostal Christianity in Cameroon.⁷⁶ Akoko's thesis suggests that

⁷³ Corten and Marshall-Fratani (eds.) *Between Babel and Pentecost*.

⁷⁴ Birgit Meyer, 'Christianity in Africa: From African independent to Pentecostal-charismatic churches', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33, (2004): 448.

⁷⁵ Akoko, 'Ask and You shall be Given', 66-80.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 69.

classical Pentecostal churches such as the Full Gospel and Apostolic groups are reconfiguring their theology from preaching a gospel of asceticism to preaching one of prosperity. This move has been partly motivated by the economic crises that hit Cameroon in 1982 which forced some classical Pentecostal churches to formulate new tactics in order to finance their services and attract new adherents. By providing jobs to unemployed citizens and preaching a gospel of prosperity as against asceticism, the Pentecostal churches have recruited members from the historic mission churches to the latter's disadvantage.⁷⁷ The historic mission churches such as the Roman Catholic and the Presbyterian Churches in Cameroon have in response to this problem allowed for the Pentecostalisation of their congregations in order to prevent their members from converting to Pentecostal churches.⁷⁸

In a further exploration of the reasons for the proliferation of Pentecostal churches in Cameroon especially in the 1990s, Paul Gifford has examined the impact of transnational missionary actors in Cameroon. The German Pentecostal evangelist Reinhardt Bonnke's famous crusade ministry in 1989 and 1990, including 'Fire Conferences', pastors' workshops and sermons that were delivered in various stadia in Kumba and Bamenda respectively, shows how transnational Pentecostal preachers operate.⁷⁹ But by suggesting that 250,000 people from more than 65 churches from different countries attended the crusade in Bamenda,⁸⁰ Gifford has indicated that transnational missionary engagements can be seen as successful and influential ventures for missionaries. It is therefore not surprising that there is an increasing presence of Nigerian preachers who over decades have migrated to Cameroon for missionary purposes and left lasting imprints in the country. Ojo rightly comments

⁷⁷ Ibid, 102-122.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 143.

⁷⁹ Ibid; Gifford, *African Christianity*, 290.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 290-92.

that Nigerian independent APCCs started coming into Cameroon in the 1990s and they have substantially fostered religious change in the country.⁸¹ The late Benson Idahosa⁸² of Nigeria, for example, was one of the most famous Pentecostal leaders on the continent of Africa and greatly influenced the prosperity-type Christianity of Pentecostal movements in the African sub-region.⁸³ Through his Idahosa Bible College in Nigeria, he trained many Pentecostal leaders from Cameroon, Ghana and elsewhere who later returned to their countries to begin Pentecostal churches.⁸⁴ One of those who trained in Idahosa's All Nations for Christ Bible Institute was Duncan Williams, who upon his graduation and return to Ghana in 1979 established the Christian Action Faith Ministries International (CAFMI) as Ghana's first indigenous charismatic church.⁸⁵ Many other church founders and preachers who have visited Idahosa's 'Miracle Centre' in Benin City have claimed to be greatly empowered by this encounter. Gifford is therefore justified in suggesting that 'Idahosa was probably the best-known church leader the Pentecostal explosion has produced in Africa and who was frequently to be found on American platforms...'⁸⁶ Another influential preacher from Nigeria is Tunde Joda, the founder of Christ Chapel International Churches of Nigeria, which has several congregations in Cameroon. Joda's popularity in Cameroon and elsewhere has been legitimised by his *Prosperity Now*, a publication that is widely read by Pentecostals in Anglophone Cameroon.⁸⁷ However, only one Cameroonian Pentecostal preacher has managed to attain an international status: Zacharias Fomum was a member of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon

⁸¹ Ojo, 'Nigerian Pentecostalism and Transnational Religious Networks', 407.

⁸² Idahosa epitomised the health and wealth prosperity gospel and exemplified it through his flamboyant lifestyle. This practice has become pervasive throughout the African continent in the 21st century with some prominent church founders and owners such as Bishop Oyedepo flying up to 4 private jets.

⁸³ Ojo, 'Transnational Religious Networks', 168-177.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 170.

⁸⁶ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 290.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

(henceforth PCC) but left it for the Full Gospel Mission, and later created the Christian Missionary Fellowship International (CMFI) in Yaoundé. As a highly respected and accomplished University professor, Fomum's reputation as a spiritual authority among Pentecostals at that time was fully affirmed. He had established congregations in most parts of Cameroon, and even some in Nigeria, before he died in 2009.⁸⁸ He also ran the Christian Publishing House, which has a branch in Nigeria, and he is said to have written more than 80 books, the most famous being *The Christian and the Money: Banking in Heaven Today*.⁸⁹

Christianity in Cameroon as elsewhere in Africa therefore clearly encompasses a broad spectrum of mission churches imported from Europe or the United States, classical Pentecostal churches that were introduced from Nigeria by European missionaries, and the new APCCs that have found expression in Cameroon mostly through Nigerian transnational missionary actors, as well as by Cameroonians. African Independent Churches have been significantly absent in the religious history of Cameroon. The significant establishment of APCCs across national and international borders has facilitated a self-representation of Pentecostal movements as transnational actors. Matthews Ojo convincingly argues that one factor that has enabled APCCs to become a transnational phenomenon is the existence of 'a corporate self-representation of their image as international based on the fact that they...have extended their missionary activities beyond Nigeria'.⁹⁰ Nigerian APCCs in Cameroon have thus added new threads to the religious tapestry of the country.

When compared with Ghana and Nigeria, which are in the same sub-region in Africa, Pentecostal growth in Cameroon has been relatively slow. This may be a

⁸⁸ Tomas S. Drønen, *Pentecostalism, Globalisation, and Islam in Northern Cameroon: Megachurches in the Making?* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013).

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ojo, 'Transnational Religious Networks', 167-79.

result of the tight control that the government exercises on Pentecostal movements, or it may be related to the relative lack of indigenous religious movements, such as the Aladura churches, which provided a springboard for the emergence of Pentecostal movements elsewhere. For, as Birgit Meyer has commented, the rise of APCCs in most African sub-Saharan countries such as Nigeria and Ghana was a result of a long history of Christian missions where the independent churches were a sign of indigenous initiative and local variations of the message and traditions presented by the missionaries.⁹¹ Aladura, or independent African churches, have therefore been historically acclaimed for preparing the way for later developments in Pentecostal Christianity.⁹² The relative lack of Aladura churches in the Christian culture of Cameroon, coupled with the strict control of evangelical churches by the state authorities,⁹³ may help to explain the slow emergence of Pentecostalism in the country.⁹⁴ Paul Gifford has concluded that the preoccupation with security by the Cameroonian State is largely responsible for the lack of African Indigenous Churches in Cameroon:⁹⁵ the tight control exercised by the Cameroon government has created a political culture of subordination that has been adopted by the religious communities, leaving little room for innovation in either religious or cultural terms.⁹⁶ The situation has been compounded by power dynamics in which the historic mission churches have been granted privileged positions and in some instances have joined forces with the government against renewalist churches, in order not to be challenged by these competing organisations.⁹⁷ For example, when the government of Cameroon closed down some PCCs for alleged illegal practices in 2013, the

⁹¹ Meyer, 'Christianity in Africa', 447-474.

⁹² Ibid, 44.

⁹³ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 293.

⁹⁴ Drønen, *Pentecostalism, Globalisation, and Islam*, 90, quoting Gifford, *African Christianity*.

⁹⁵ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 292.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid; also see Akoko, 'Ask and You Shall be Given', 187.

Roman Catholic Bishops in Cameroon warned of the lure of APCCs.⁹⁸ Based on the evidence, it may well be that established historic mission churches are using their privileged positions to influence the closing down of APCCs whenever they find the opportunity to do so. This situation seems to suggest that there is no religious freedom in Cameroon, despite the country being a secular state in which religious freedom is enshrined in law.

However, religious freedom in Cameroon is guaranteed by Law 90-53 (December 19, 1990), which, alongside other laws and policies, protects religious freedom.⁹⁹ The constitution also provides for the right of individuals to choose, practise, and change their religion, and guarantees the right of any citizen to sue the government for the violation of any constitutionally protected freedom.¹⁰⁰ Cameroon is one of several African states that have declared themselves secular in the sense that no one religion is privileged. However, by consistently subsidising religious festivals such as the Muslim yearly pilgrimage, the Cameroonian state seems to show a desire to occupy an ambiguous position with respect to religion. Asonzeh Ukah reports the same situation regarding the Nigerian government in his research on the RCCG. He argues that the Nigerian State interferes in religious matters by subsidising pilgrimages, appointing the leader of Muslims in the country and funding the construction of places of worship such as mosques and Christian ecumenical centres.¹⁰¹ Ukah thus concludes that ‘religion is neither fully established nor totally disestablished and free from governmental interference’.¹⁰² The same could be said

⁹⁸ BBC News 24th April 2007, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa>: (Accessed 13/05/15).

⁹⁹ Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2016 - Cameroon*, 12 August 2016, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57b1ad5f102.html>: (Accessed 05/04/2017).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Asonzeh Ukah, ‘The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Nigeria: Local Identities and Global Processes in African Pentecostalism’ (PhD diss., University of Bayreuth, 2003), 4.

¹⁰² Ibid.

of Cameroon, whose constitution does not define in any detail the specific legal-political ramifications of the concepts of secularity, neutrality, or independence from state intervention in the way in which they are defined in some other constitutions. 'None of the ten of its thirty-six articles specifically dealing with freedom of religion and worship and aspects of the relationship between the church and the state define any of these three concepts.'¹⁰³ The consequence of this is that many new churches are constantly being persecuted and closed down by the government, which claims that such churches are extortionist or misleading Cameroonians. André Caballero wrote an article entitled "Pray or Prey? Cameroon's Pentecostal Churches Face Crackdown".¹⁰⁴ Caballero used the argument of Issa Tchiroma Bakary, Cameroon's Minister of Communication, to demonstrate how government officials in Cameroon are interpreting the activities of some Pentecostal churches. The minister had claimed that revival churches were disturbing neighbours with loud services and ripping off vulnerable people, and that some pastors engage in criminal practices such as extortion. The government has therefore decided to close down churches wherever their presence becomes harmful to society.¹⁰⁵ Winners' Chapel, the church under study was among APCCs that were closed down in 2013 on orders of the Cameroonian state government. One other church that was recently closed down is the Ministry Faith Banner in Douala. The church founder, Pastor George Nfor Asongyu, rather claimed that they were accused of praying too much, disturbing, breaking down marriages, destroying homes and exploiting homes. According to

¹⁰³ Fombad, 'State, Religion and Law in Cameroon', 58.

¹⁰⁴ Andre Caballero, Africa: 'Pray or Prey? Cameroon's Pentecostal Churches Face Crackdown', 13 April 2014, available at: <http://www.npr.org/2014/04/13/300975474/pray-or-prey-camerons-pentecostal-churches-face-crackdown>: (Accessed 04/06/2015).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Asongyu, ‘this is not true... Even if there are churches that do that, it is not me. I know what call God has given me for this nation’.¹⁰⁶

Tomas Drønen observes that the Cameroonian religious situation merits sensitive analysis and a balanced consideration of both the internal and external factors that characterise APCCs activities throughout the country.¹⁰⁷ Although anthropologists and sociologists of religion generally acknowledge the influence of Nigerian Pentecostal churches in Cameroonian Christianity, there exists little or no comprehensive analysis of the transnational character of an independent Pentecostal church from Nigeria in the country. The present study intends to examine not only the transnational character of APCCs in Cameroon but also their power dynamics, using Winners’ Chapel in Cameroon as a case study.

1.4. Statement of the Problem

From my earliest days as a student of theology, throughout nine years of service as a minister and administrator with the PCC, and now as a postgraduate student of World Christianity, I have consistently been interested in the reasons for the proliferation of Pentecostal churches throughout the world, but especially in Africa. As a result of carrying out research on Pentecostal transnationalism in a Ghanaian immigrant church in Glasgow, I have been intrigued by the dynamics of proliferation of these movements in the Diaspora.¹⁰⁸ However, I still wonder why and how Pentecostal movements in Africa are negotiating space within the African continent. My curiosity for the most part rests on the potential of Pentecostal churches, which migrate from Nigeria to make persistent inroads into Cameroon and maintain their power and influence over Cameroonians.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Drønen, *Pentecostalism, Globalisation*, 5-8.

¹⁰⁸ Amos Chewachong, ‘Intra-national Pentecostalism and the Dynamics of Proliferation: The Church of Pentecost UK’ (MTh diss., School of Divinity School, University of Edinburgh, 2013).

Within the last few decades, the religious demography of Cameroon has been in a state of ferment. The existing religious groupings of Islam, indigenous religions and Christianity are in constant flux in a bid to negotiate space within the religious marketplace. Most noticeable in this phenomenon has been the influx of APCCs from Nigeria with their tendency to influence the religious worldviews of Cameroonians with their impressionistic styles of worship and claims of power and miracles. Some of these churches have also been grappling with constant tensions with ‘the powers that be.’¹⁰⁹ The consistent demonisation of these movements both by existing historic mission churches and the state authorities in Cameroon is a telling indication of such power-related modalities. For example, while a former Synod Clerk¹¹⁰ of the PCC dismisses Nigerian APCCs in Cameroon as the work of ‘commercial Nigerian preachers,’¹¹¹ the Cameroon government constantly closes them down for creating rising insecurity amongst their compatriots.¹¹² This strict control of APCCs in the country has left the movement on the margins of the religious field—a dynamic which Gifford describes as having the effect of ‘choking off a whole generation of Nigeria’s independent churches’ in Cameroon.¹¹³ The relationship between Pentecostal churches, mission historic churches and the Cameroonian nation-state provides an interesting research subject especially in the light of ongoing contestations and loyalties that might be inherent in their dealings.

¹⁰⁹ ‘*The powers that be*’ is the main title of a book by Walter Wink, whose full title is *The Powers that be: Theology for a New Millennium*, New York: Doubleday, 1998. I use it here to mean the existing religious groups in Cameroon, such as historic mission churches and the Cameroonian government which have often been quite suspicious about Pentecostal movements, especially the ones coming into the country from Nigeria and the contestations that go on amongst these groups.

¹¹⁰ The Synod Clerk of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon is the chief of staff and second-in-command after the Moderator of the church, the one in question held the position from 1999-2009.

¹¹¹ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 293.

¹¹² Jeremy Weber, ‘Cameroon Orders Military to close 100 Churches in major Cities’, In *Christianity Today*, *Gleanings: Important Developments in the Church and the World*, 19/08/13, available at: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2013/august>, In another report by the CNN, it is reported that a young girl died in a Winners Chapel congregation in Bamenda during a deliverance service, available at: <http://pmnewsnigeria.com/2013/08/16/winners-chapel-others-shut-down-in-cameroon/>: (Accessed 05/04/17).

¹¹³ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 293.

According to Birgit Meyer, if anthropologists and African theologians were to focus on religion in ‘Africa as a dynamic field, in which so-called AICs, mission, or mainline churches and traditional religion are in on-going exchange, conflict, and dialogue with each other’, this could greatly influence the ways in which they construct their research objectives.¹¹⁴ Meyer’s suggestion situates interreligious conflicts and power dynamics within a metanarrative of differing religious groups. However, this perspective may overlook the contestations and power dynamics that may be at play within independent APCCs in their cross-border missionary engagements within the continent of Africa. For example, Nigerian-founded APCCs such as Winners’ Chapel, the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (henceforth MFM) and the RCCG in Cameroon might be grappling with issues of power within their missionary engagements in Cameroon and with Cameroonians. Studies that are related to power modalities within independent transnational APCCs from Nigeria would be important because APCCs from Nigeria occupy conspicuous and diverse territories in Cameroon despite the challenges they have to face from the existing religious groups and within their ranks. Their obsession with mission, coupled with their seemingly pervasive nature, and ability to convince Cameroonians of their expertise seems to increase their popularity within the Cameroonian religious mosaic. These Nigerian-founded APCCs are also significantly expanding in both the Anglophone and Francophone regions of the country. For example, Winners’ Chapel first settled in Douala—the Francophone-dominated economic headquarters of Cameroon in 1996 and has now spread to other Francophone, Anglophone and Muslim-dominated regions such as Yaoundé, Bamenda and Garoua respectively.¹¹⁵ This development seems to contradict both Akoko’s claim that APCCs from Nigeria

¹¹⁴ Meyer, ‘Christianity in Africa’, 450.

¹¹⁵ Job Molewe, Telephone interview (15/2/14); Email exchange, 22/03/14. Molewe is one of the pastors at the Buea Assembly of Winners’ Chapel Cameroon and an accountant.

usually settle in Anglophone regions of Cameroon before traversing the Francophone regions, because of contextual exigencies especially in terms of the language (English),¹¹⁶ and Gifford's claim,¹¹⁷ shared by Tomas, that the Anglophone part of Cameroon is the gateway for APCCs from Nigeria.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, the initial settlement of a Nigerian-founded church with English as its main language of communication in the French-dominated geocultural space of Douala, instantiates the question raised by Drønen: 'What happens when a predominantly Anglophone-inspired movement spreads in a Francophone area?'¹¹⁹ But Douala is cosmopolitan and the richest city in the Central African sub-region, which might provide all the attendant facilities needed for new movements to emerge. This study aims to account for the emergence of Winners' Chapel, first in Douala and its spread to other contexts in Cameroon.

Drønen's scepticism about the close link between APCCs and North American notions also raises the question whether these movements are dependent on some vague link to an Anglo-Saxon or North American economic or political culture in order to succeed.¹²⁰ This concern about the often-emphasised extraversion of APCCs by scholars like Paul Gifford needs careful consideration because as Droogers argues, if the starting-point for investigating the expansion of religious groups is the prevailing external social processes, it could be difficult to examine the specifics of particular religious groups objectively.¹²¹ These social processes, Droogers maintains, 'usually affect other religions as well, whether they are growing or not, and the particularities of specific religious situations are usually insufficiently

¹¹⁶ Akoko, *Ask and You shall be Given*, 56.

¹¹⁷ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 293.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 289; Drønen, *Pentecostalism, Globalisation*, 69.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 5.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 3.

¹²¹ Droogers, 'Globalisation and Pentecostal Success', 41.

explained in the light of these external processes alone.’¹²² A more nuanced study of the expansion of religious movements therefore could begin with the particularities of a specific religion before proceeding to how it is influenced by external social processes. This approach might be helpful in determining why new adherents are persuaded to affiliate to one religion and not another in the religious marketplace.¹²³

1.5. Research Question

Since coming to Cameroon from Nigeria, Winners’ Chapel has expanded from Douala into other regions of the country. This study intends to account for the emergence and proliferation of Winners’ Chapel in Cameroon. What are the current expansionist strategies of Winners’ Chapel in Cameroon, and what do they reveal about the character of intra-African Pentecostalism? As an APCC founded in Nigeria and flourishing in Cameroon from the mid-1990s, in what ways can the existence of Winners’ Chapel in Cameroon be accounted for as a form of intra-African Pentecostalism and what issues of power and control and/or spiritual power, emerge from its operations? There are three sub-questions to be addressed in this study.

- What were the motivating factors that led to the founding of Winners’ Chapel in Cameroon, and who were the main protagonists?
- What is the significance of Nigerian Winners’ Chapel missionaries to Cameroon and what kinds of loyalty, contestations and resistance emerge between the missionaries and their Cameroonian colleagues in Cameroon?
- In what ways can Winners’ Chapel be seen as contributing to social capital and empowerment to Cameroonians?

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

1.6. Justification of the Study

Contemporary literature and keen observers would agree that, over the last few decades, Winners' Chapel, like other APCCs, such as the RCCG, has become a megachurch and has assumed a conspicuous global stature as it spreads to other African countries and the African Diaspora. Matthews Ojo claims that the phenomenal growth of APCCs in Africa since the 1970s is partly linked to the movement's mode of transmission as a transnational phenomenon.¹²⁴ He argues that one of the reasons for this transnationalisation is the creation of megachurches with multi-ethnic congregations, which later expand into other countries. However, the entrepreneurial organisation, sophisticated marketing techniques, and the modernising tendencies of these churches have been effective in their process of internationalisation across political borders.¹²⁵ What scholars like Ojo do not address as a successful strategy for APCCs in their transnational religious domains is the appropriation of temporal structures of power that are positioned by founder leaders in order to maintain and sustain their spiritual power beyond the foundational base of their churches. Might there be some modernising tendencies that are being employed in the Winners' Chapel in order to carry out its mission in Cameroon, and what might be some of the temporal power structures that are used by the Nigerian mother church to control the Cameroonian daughter one?

Winners' Chapel has been described elsewhere as the most important Nigerian APCC to make considerable strides in its expansion into other West African countries in the mid-1990s.¹²⁶ The Deeper Life Bible Church, for example, first attempted to negotiate religious space in Cameroon in 1982, but it took nine years for

¹²⁴ Ojo, 'Transnational Religious Networks', 170.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 169-70.

this church to finally take root in 2001, partly because the first missionaries could not secure residency permits in Cameroon.¹²⁷ In comparison, Winners' Chapel with its emphasis on success and prosperity, seems to have attracted a considerable following from the outset, so that by 1995 branches of the church had been established in Monrovia, Liberia, and Freetown, Sierra Leone, through the ingenuity of two pastors from Nigeria who had completed a Bible training programme on faith and prosperity. In 1996, additional branches were established in Accra-Ghana, Lome-Togo, Niamey-Niger Republic, and Douala in Cameroon.¹²⁸ Although by 1945 Pentecostal groups such as the Full Gospel Mission and the Apostolic Church had already settled in Cameroon from Nigeria,¹²⁹ Winners' Chapel was arguably the first APCC to make inroads into Cameroon, in contrast to the hitherto classical Pentecostal types.¹³⁰ What role does Winners' Chapel biblical training play in the expansion of the church from Nigeria to other African countries?

Winners' Chapel has existed in Cameroon for almost two decades and has spread from Douala to all other regions of the country. Its growth has been concomitant with that of other Pentecostal movements in the country, most of which have also emigrated from Nigeria.¹³¹ One way to account for the emergence and spread of these movements could be to situate them within the migration trajectory. The population of Nigeria is estimated at over 150 million and a proportion of this population continue to seek refuge in parts of Africa and the Diaspora owing to

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 170.

¹²⁹ Akoko, *'Ask and You Shall Be Given'*, 66-9.

¹³⁰ There is always a distinction in the literature between the earlier Classical Pentecostal movements such as the Assemblies of God, Full Gospel Mission and the Deeper Life Bible Church, which often emphasised asceticism, and the newer charismatic types, such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God and the Winners Chapel, which preach a prosperity, health and wealth gospel to their adherents and sympathisers. This distinction is, however, fluid today because most Pentecostal churches are resorting to the prosperity gospel or moving from 'asceticism to accumulation.'

¹³¹ BBC NEWS, Africa, 'Nigerian pastors spread into Cameroon', available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/religion-27052014>: (Accessed 27/05/2014).

ethnic and religious conflicts and poverty. At least 70% of the inhabitants of Nigeria live below the poverty line. Meanwhile ethnic and religious violence, as is happening in Jos and other parts of the country, continues to drive Nigerians into neighbouring African countries and elsewhere.¹³² Cameroon, being a relatively peaceful country in the sub-region, and bordered by Nigeria on several fronts, seems to be one of the most common recipients of Nigerians who migrate within the continent. For example, apart from refugees that sought asylum in Cameroon from Chad and the Central African Republic in 2006 and 2007, at least 3,000 Nigerians emigrated into Cameroon to seek refuge and for other reasons during these two years.¹³³ The Cameroon government recently sent home about 15,000 Nigerians who had come to Cameroon fleeing from the Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria.¹³⁴ However, Cameroonians have also crossed boundaries into Nigeria for several other reasons. Before the late 1990s Cameroon had only one university, which is in Yaoundé, the capital city, and all the courses were taught in French. Cameroonians who at that time were unable to understand French had to travel to Nigeria for their university studies. This was because Nigeria is a former British colony where the language of instruction in their universities is English. Some Cameroonians who studied in Nigeria returned to Cameroon and started some of the earliest Pentecostal churches that exist in the country.¹³⁵

One of the main justifications for this study is the consideration that the Church under investigation is fully established in Cameroon with diverse networks

¹³² Blessing Mberu, 'Nigeria: Multiple Forms of Mobility in Africa's Demographic Giant', in *Migration Information Source*, 2010, Available at: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/nigeria-multiple-forms-mobility-africas-demographic-giant>: (Accessed 05/04/17).

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Sylvestre Tetchiada, 'Cameroon Forcing Refugees who Fled Boko Haram Back to Nigeria', Yaoundé 21/08/15, available at: <http://africajournalismtheworld.com/2015/08/22/cameroon-forcing-refugees-who-fled-boko-haram-back-to-nigeria>: (Accessed 03/09/15).

¹³⁵ Ojo, 'Transnational Religious Networks', 170.

and there is a significant Nigerian population in Cameroon. Moreover, current studies on Pentecostalism in Cameroon have not captured the perspective that will be adopted in the study. This study investigates the emergence and establishment of a single influential Nigerian APCC in Cameroon over the past twenty years. It tries to make sense of the reasons why the Nigerian Winners' Chapel mother church sends a series of missionaries to lead strategic congregations of the daughter church in Cameroon. This means that the study investigates on-going processes/practices within the missionary ambitions of the Nigerian Winners' Chapel APCC in Cameroon. The justification for this study is therefore based on the three main conditions for the study of transnationalism as proposed by Portes *et al.*: (a) 'the process involves a significant proportion of persons in the relevant universe (in this case, immigrants and their home country counterparts); (b) the activities of interest are not (transient) fleeting or exceptional, but possess certain stability and resilience over time; and (c) the content of these activities is not captured by some pre-existing concept, making the invention of a new term redundant.'¹³⁶ At the centre of the study is an interrogation of the representation of transnational missionary actors within trajectories of power in their host nation-states.

1.7. The Objectives and Aims of the Study

In this study, I aim to investigate the missionary motivation/strategies and power dynamics of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon, and examine how these resonate with contemporary discourses about intra-African Pentecostalism. Scholars of religious transnationalism have often captured the subject from the South-North perspective, referring to the 'reverse mission' of these movements, which implies a conscious attempt to bring the gospel to the North (or West) in what has been termed the 'dark

¹³⁶ Alejandro Portes, Luis E. Guarnizo, and Patricia Landolt, 'The study of transnationalism: pitfalls and promise of an emergent research field', *Ethnic and racial studies* 22, no. 2 (1999): 219.

continent of Europe.’¹³⁷ In this way, missions could too easily be perceived as a movement from Africa to the West, to the neglect of missionary movements within Africa.¹³⁸ One of the aims of this study is to contribute to current conversations about transnational Pentecostalism and power in the African continent by using Winners’ Chapel in Cameroon as case study. The research aim is therefore to investigate the relationship between missions/religious transnationalism and power from an intra-African perspective. The three main aims/objectives of the study are:

- To investigate the emergence of Winners’ Chapel in Cameroon.
- To examine the various strategies used to achieve and maintain the control of the mother church in Nigeria over its daughter church in Cameroon, including any contestations, conflicts and loyalty that may emerge because of such strategies.
- To assess how far Winners’ Chapel can be said to contribute to the provision of social capital and empowerment in Cameroon.

1.8. Chapter Outline

This thesis comprises six chapters plus a summary and conclusion. In the first chapter, I have provided a brief historical background to the academic discourse on African Pentecostalism and transnationalism and have pointed out the academic gap which the thesis sets out to address. The chapter has also situated the research objectives, the socio-political and religious demography of Cameroon within which the Nigerian Winners’ Chapel is negotiating religious space and wielding its power. In chapter two, the methodology that is employed for the study is explicated. In chapter three, attention is focused on the context of the study in terms of the

¹³⁷ Israel Olofinjana, *Reverse in Ministry and Missions: Africans in the Dark Continent of Europe: An Historical Study of African Churches in Europe* (Milton Keynes: Author House, 2000).

¹³⁸ Mac Einri, ‘Introduction’, in Bielenberg A (ed.) *The Irish Diaspora* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 1-2.

literature on Pentecostal transnationalism in order to situate the study within existing scholarship on religious transnationalism. The chapter also briefly highlights the theoretical framework of the research in order to introduce the main debates that are engaged in the following chapters. Chapters four, five and six are the main research chapters of the study, based on fieldwork carried out in Cameroon from 2014 to 2016. In chapter four, accounts of the emergence of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon are presented and the reasons examined. In chapter five, the power dynamics within the missionary operations of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon are examined. Chapter six of the study is an appraisal of the contributions of social capital and empowerment of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. In the concluding chapter, the main points of the study are recapitulated and their implications for scholarship on Pentecostal transnationalism and power examined.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the research design, material and methods that have been used in the collection and analysis of the research data and provides insights into some methodological pitfalls, including other predictable and unpredictable challenges that emerged during the fieldwork in Cameroon which are relevant to the study. The chapter consists of four main sections. The first section examines the research design by briefly explicating the quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to justify why the latter has been employed for studying the Nigerian transnational APCC in Cameroon. This section also interrogates the concept of multi-sited ethnography and shows how useful and challenging ethnographic approaches can prove in understanding transnational movements. The second section examines the use of in-depth interviews and participant observation as the main methods in generating data in this study. In the third section, some of the historical material that has been used in the research is revealed and significantly explained. The last section explores the coding of the qualitative data and how the data has been analysed.

2.2. Research Design

The methodology employed for this study was both empirical and historical research methods involving the use of records and secondary data. Fieldwork involved the use of a variety of qualitative research methods, including observation, which was both participatory and non-participatory, interviews, research questions, and informal conversations.

Qualitative research is a naturalistic approach to the world whereby a set of interpretive and material practices make the object of research visible to the researcher and transforms it into a series of representations through field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos.¹ ‘Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them’.² This definition provides an initial springboard to qualitative research as a situated activity in which the researcher needs to visit the research field in order to grasp the lived world experiences of those he/she is studying and their related institutions. However, we should note that Uwe Flick, Ernst Von Kardoff and Ines Steinke add that qualitative research seeks to draw attention to processes, meanings, patterns and structural features which may remain closed to non-participants, but, as a rule, are not consciously known by actors caught up in their unquestioned daily routine.³

Accordingly, as Flick *et al* put it:

Qualitative research, with its precise and ‘thick’ descriptions, does not simply depict reality, nor does it practise exoticism for its own sake. It rather makes use of the unnatural or the deviant and unexpected as a source of insight and a mirror whose reflection makes the unknown perceptible in the known, and the known perceptible in the unknown, thereby opening further possibilities for (self-) recognition.⁴

While the two stated definitions agree on the fact that qualitative ‘research is an interpretive enterprise’, it is the definition of Flick *et al* which I find very helpful for this research because it profiles qualitative research as instrumental in drawing attention to meanings and structural features that may sometimes be unknown to

¹ N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research. 3rd edition* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 3.

² Ibid.

³ Uwe Flick, Ernst Von Kardoff and Ines Steinke (eds.) *A Companion to Qualitative Research* (London: Sage, 2004), 1.

⁴ Ibid.

those who are not involved in the research and which are unknown to the researched, who may be caught up in their 'unquestioned routines'. I have employed both definitions to investigate the emergence and power dynamics of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon following a case study approach.

Social scientists often treat quantitative and qualitative research as mutually antagonistic, probably because quantitative patterns depend on the positivist approach of the natural sciences and are often orientated towards objectivism, generalisations and effectiveness. On the contrary, qualitative research is generally multiple in its methods and involves an interpretive approach to those who are being researched.⁵ To this end, other scholars have suggested that researchers should employ both quantitative and qualitative research methods of data production as interrelated and not opposed to one another.⁶ But some scholars, such as Gilbert and Robson, argue that combining the two research methods as strategies for research ignores underlying epistemological and ontological assumptions of each research strategy.⁷ One reason is because quantitative and qualitative research approaches are distinctive and can be 'appropriate to different kinds of research problems in which case, the research issue should determine which style of research is to be used'.⁸

The aim of this study is to investigate the missionary motivations/strategies and transnational/power dynamics of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. It also seeks to demonstrate the relevance of Winners' Chapel within the religious and public domains of Cameroon. Hence a qualitative approach seems to be most appropriate in

⁵ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁶ Alan Bryman, 'The Debate About Quantitative and Qualitative Research', in Alan Bryman and Roger G. Burgess (eds.) *Qualitative Research*, 1999, 47; C. Hughes, 'Mystifying through Coalescence: The Underlying Politics of Methodological Choices' in Keith Watson and C. Modgil (eds.) *Educational Dilemmas: Debate and Diversity* (London: Cassell, 1996), 413-420.

⁷ Nigel Gilbert, 'Research, Theory and Method', in Nigel Gilbert (ed.) *Researching Social Life* (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 14-21; Robson Colin, *Real world research* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

⁸ Bryman, 'The Debate about Quantitative and Qualitative Research', 47.

understanding the meanings of social actors, contradictions and narratives of transnational missionary actors and the ways in which concepts of power are negotiated by the Nigerian-founded Pentecostal movement in their operations in foreign territories. It is the empirical method of ethnography in qualitative research that is most suited to this kind of investigation.

2.2.1. Ethnography in Transnational Studies

Ethnography as a social research method does not have a standardised definition because it overlaps with other labels such as, ‘qualitative inquiry’, ‘fieldwork’, ‘interpretive method’, ‘case study’, and participant observation.⁹ This means that ethnography is not an alternative research pattern but a method or set of methods because ‘it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions...collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research’.¹⁰ Ethnographic research therefore becomes a style of research in which a variety of techniques are used in the collection of data.¹¹ Social scientists have used ethnography in order to understand the subjective meanings of social actors because ‘ethnography is predicated upon attention to the everyday, and intimate knowledge of face to face communities and groups’.¹² Consequently, ‘doing ethnography is a commitment to study an issue at hand by

⁹ John Creswell, Vicki L. Plano Clark, Michelle L. Gutmann and William E. Hanson (Eds.) ‘Advanced mixed methods research designs’, *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural research* (2003): 209-240.

¹⁰ Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice, 2nd edition* (London: Routledge, 1995), 1.

¹¹ John Brewer, ‘Ethnography’ in Catherine Cassell and Gillian Symon (eds.) *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organisational Research* (London: Sage, 2004), 312.

¹² George Marcus, ‘Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-sited Ethnography’, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24 no. 1 (1995): 95-117.

understanding it from the perspective of people whose lives are tied up with or affected by it...'¹³

However, the question to ask about ethnography and in relation to this study is, how can ethnography be upheld in an age of globalisation and transnationalisation when the supposition of a well-bounded site is increasingly becoming harder to preserve,¹⁴ and where concepts such as 'global ethnography' and 'multi-sited ethnography' have been introduced to challenge the 'narrow boundaries of traditional ethnographic 'site'¹⁵ as conceived by the Chicago School'?¹⁶ It is the new concepts such as global ethnography and multi-sited ethnography that seem useful for understanding the relations between the local, the transnational and the global. This means that a multi-sited method of enquiry might be helpful in transnational research in order to address some of the epistemological and methodological challenges of studying transnational social relations of religious groups in new host territories. It is also intended to avoid findings that may misrepresent transnational groups as might happen if they were studied from a single site or locality.¹⁷ A multi-sited ethnographic approach was adopted in this study.

¹³ Gille Zsuzsa, 'Critical Ethnography in the Time of Globalisation: Toward a New Concept of Site', *Cultural Studies- Critical Methodologies* 1, no. 3 (2001): 319-321.

¹⁴ David Fitzgerald, 'Towards a theoretical ethnography of migration', *Qualitative Sociology* 29, no. 1 (2006): 1-24.

¹⁵ Teresa Gowan and Riain Sean, 'At Home with the Global Ethnographer', In Michael Burawoy, Joseph A. Blum, Sheba George, Zsuzsa Gille, and Millie Thayer (eds.) *Global ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2000), ix-xv.

¹⁶ The 'Chicago School' refers to a specific group of sociologists at the University of Chicago during the first half of the 20th century whose way of thinking about social relationships was heavily qualitative, rigorous in data analysis, and focused on the city as a social laboratory.

¹⁷ David Fitzgerald, 'Ethnographies of migration', *Department of Sociology, UCLA*, 2004.

2.3. Multi-Sited Ethnography

George Marcus developed and popularised the concept of multi-sited research when he referred to the practice of studying any given phenomenon across multiple sites – that is, looking at events and practices of groups from different locations.¹⁸ The uniqueness of multi-sited ethnography is that it facilitates the development of connections and distinctive discourses from site to site. Its contribution lies in its ability to explore the relationships between supposed discordant elements, that is, connections between contexts.¹⁹ According to Hannerz multi-sited field work involves the researcher ‘being there...and there...and there’.²⁰ Integral to multi-sited ethnography is the comparative dimension, which is also its greatest strength and requires the ethnographer to renegotiate his/her identity as he/she traverses the different research sites.²¹ During fieldwork in Cameroon, I realised that it was impossible for any pastor or church member of Winners’ Chapel to answer questions concerning the church from people they could not identify. It was therefore important for me first to obtain permission from the national pastor in order to proceed with my investigations. One of the questions my respondents often asked me was whether their pastor was aware that I had to interview them. If my response was no, then the respondent would kindly suggest that he/she was not able to grant any interviews without the knowledge of their pastor. Local pastors often demanded to know whether the national pastor knew me and had permitted me to carry out my research. It thus became clear that for each research site, I needed to renegotiate permission in order to carry out research. Hannerz significantly points out that ‘the sites are

¹⁸ Marcus, ‘Ethnography in/of the world System’, 95-117.

¹⁹ Dominic Pasura, ‘A Fractured Diaspora: Strategies and Identities among Zimbabweans in Britain’ (PhD diss., University of Warwick, 2008), 67.

²⁰ Ulf Hannerz, ‘Being there... and there... and there! Reflections on Multi-site Ethnography’, *Ethnography* 4, no. 2 (2003): 211.

²¹ Marcus, ‘Ethnography in/of the world system’, 95-117.

connected with one another in such ways that the relationships between them are as important for this formulation as the relationships within them, the fields are not some mere collection of local units'.²² Multi-sited research therefore presents an opportunity to examine any relationships and connections that exist between research sites as units of analysis.

2.3.1. Selection of Research Sites in Cameroon

This research was carried out in four cities in Cameroon: Douala, Buea, Bamenda and Yaoundé. The choice of the cities/sites for my research was informed by their demography and history in relation to the establishment of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon within the context of evangelisation and mission. Douala is the economic capital of Cameroon and is where Winners' Chapel first emerged in 1996. Douala in 2016 had 26 Winners' Chapel branches with at least three missionaries from Nigeria who served the three most affluent Winners' Chapel congregations in the city (Ndogbong, Bonaberi and Bonapriso). Douala remains the headquarters of the church in Cameroon where the National Pastor, a Nigerian, resides and from where new branches have been created. Buea is an English-speaking student city and the former capital of former West Cameroon. It is the city where Winners' Chapel was opened next in Cameroon after Douala and has a missionary from Nigeria as the district pastor of Buea District. Bamenda is another English-speaking city and the Regional Headquarters of the Northwest Region of Cameroon, which many observers believe to be a main entrance point for most Pentecostal Churches from Nigeria. Bamenda also has a Nigerian missionary who is district head of the Bamenda district. Yaoundé is the national capital of Cameroon and has one of the biggest Winners' Chapel congregations after Douala.

²² Hannerz, 'Being there... and there...' 206.

Related to the various techniques used in this ethnographic research are other aspects of clearance that were necessary in order to engage with the communities and respondents whose thoughts are reflected in this study. Firstly, I carried out a self-audit for Research Ethics Assessment and was given clearance by the School of Divinity's Research Committee. There were potentially no risks in this study because it involved mostly leaders of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon and avoided any work with minors. However, because some of the information I have obtained is very sensitive and could implicate some of my respondents, I provided further information to the Divinity School's Research Ethics Committee on how I would handle the data and issues of confidentiality.²³ I also sought permission from the national headquarters of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. I had several informal discussions with the National Pastor of the church about relevant aspects of the research including, how confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained, the ways in which the final results would be used, and how consent forms for participation and personal data were going to be handled and used. I was finally granted permission but the National Pastor refused to grant a formal interview to me.

2.3.2. Problems and Challenges of Multi-Sited Ethnography

Practical and methodological issues often arise from the use of multi-sited ethnography. One problem is that the researcher might shun the ethnographic richness that accompanies conducting research in one place over time. As Gille and Riain noted, multi-sited research even when based on consistent return and follow-up trips still runs the risk of being too thinly spread, and demanding a sacrifice of the

²³ I have used Pseudonyms in most of this research unless stated otherwise in order to protect the identity of respondents who asked me not to release their real names. See Appendix B for demographic information of the respondents.

normally leisurely pace of traditional ethnographic work.²⁴ If we agree with Fitzgerald that ‘multi-sited work tests the limits of a method thought to rely on deep, local knowledge of everyday interactions as a means to understand members’ experiences,²⁵ then the question which faces the researcher is: How many sites can be studied extensively before the ‘criteria’ of depth are compromised?’²⁶ Furthermore, the fact that multi-sited ethnography requires a selection of sites among those which could potentially be included in the research, means that deciding which one is worth including in the research can be problematic.²⁷ In order to solve these problems, multi-sited researchers suggest that researchers need to ‘follow people’, ‘the thing’, ‘the metaphor’, ‘story or allegory’, ‘the life or biography’ and ‘the conflict’.²⁸ It is therefore expedient for the researcher to determine a concept of selection of sites that would be relevant to the research questions he/she has defined for the particular study. The research field may not necessarily guide the research but it is important to note that ‘site selections are to an extent made gradually and cumulatively as new insights develop, opportunities come into sight, and to some extent by chance’.²⁹

Even though I initially selected four sites for my fieldwork in Cameroon, I ended up spending a majority of my time in Douala. One of the reasons was that within one month of my arrival in the research field, I noticed that the concept of power was very important in Winners’ Chapel. This became evident in the way roles were distributed in the church so that Nigerian missionaries occupied most lucrative

²⁴ Gille Zsuzsa and Sean Riain, ‘Global Ethnography’, *Annual Review of Sociology* 28, no. 1 (2002): 271-295.

²⁵ David Fitzgerald, ‘Towards a theoretical ethnography of migration’, *Qualitative Sociology* 29, no. 1 (2006): 4.

²⁶ James Clifford, ‘Diasporas’, *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (1994): 302-338.

²⁷ Hannerz, ‘Being there... and there...’ 206.

²⁸ Marcus, ‘Ethnography in/of the world system’, 95-117.

²⁹ Hannerz, ‘Being there...’ 207.

positions such as the national and district pastors while Cameroonian pastors planted, nurtured and then handed over these full-grown Winners' Chapel congregations to Nigerian missionaries/leaders. This new discovery became very important for my research because it had the potential to reveal how issues of power and powerlessness may inform our grasp of some concepts and patterns of intra-African Pentecostalism. After consultations with my primary supervisor, I had to reconfigure my research title from 'dynamics of proliferation' to 'dynamics of power'. This is quite helpful and means that my thesis is not primarily looking at the localisation of worship or spirituality in the different regions of Cameroon but more at the transnational/power relationships between the Nigerian mother church and the Cameroonian daughter church. In that regard, I needed to investigate issues around the leadership/administration of Nigerian missionaries including correspondence between the latter and Cameroonian indigenous pastors. I also needed to find any documents that could provide information on some of the operations of the church. That is why I concentrated my findings in Douala because, apart from the fact that Winners' Chapel Cameroon first emerged here, Douala is also the national headquarters of the church with its attendant offices for administration. The Administrator of the church in Cameroon, a Cameroonian in this case also resides in Douala and keeps all records of the church. He is also charged with representing the church in any court cases in Cameroon. I had also noticed from a reading of Bishop Oyedepo's Mandate³⁰ and during participant observations that church practices in Winners' Chapel are fairly similar throughout the world. For example, sermon guides are prepared and sent out from the international headquarters in Nigeria to branches throughout the world. The same applies to other programmes of the church, and

³⁰ The Mandate is the Operational Manual of the Living Faith Church Worldwide Compiled by the Church Founder-Leader, David Oyedepo in 2012.

pastors are monitored to ensure that they implement such practices as are prescribed by the Mandate.³¹ As I moved from one location to the other during my field research, it was quite evident that the patterns were the same except that in some semi-urban areas like Wum in the North West Region the church building was poorly built and incomplete, with no ceiling, floor, and the walls not plastered. However, the position of Douala as the national headquarters and administrative base of the church in Cameroon, meant that it provided the best place for me to look for evidence toward the study. The National Pastor, Dominion even claimed:

Winners' Chapel in Cameroon started here in Ndogbong-Douala and this remains the seat of the church where all major decisions in Cameroon are taken. Look behind me, those are files from all the different Zones, Areas and Districts of Winners' Chapel Churches in Cameroon. We are very organized in this church and that is how the administration goes right up to the Bishop in Nigeria. Everything you want to know about Winners' Chapel in Cameroon is found in the Mandate. But as long as you come to our programs here in Ndogbong, you will also be able to see how we function because Winners' is the same everywhere.³²

Pastor Dominion seemed to suggest that there is a certain form of homogeneity across all Winners' Chapel congregations in Cameroon, or by extension, the world. However, one of my subsidiary aims in this research was to subject this claim to critical assessment. This is reflected in the analysis I make in chapter 5 of this study about the homogenisation of Winners' Chapel. Apart from Ndogbong in Douala, the national headquarters of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon, which was my main research site, I also carried out investigations in the district headquarters of the churches in Douala such as Bonaberi and in Buea, Bamenda and Yaoundé, and also visited other congregations such as Tiko whenever an interviewee proposed that an

³¹ Pastor Paul Menyole, Interview (04/02/16), Douala.

³² Informal conversations with the National Pastor of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon, Douala, 18/10/2015

important respondent could be found in that location. All district heads of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon are Nigerian missionaries.

2.4. Ethnography of a Nigerian Transnational Pentecostal Church in Cameroon

Winners' Chapel in Cameroon as an object of study required empirical research as a methodological approach in order to understand the transnational and power dynamics of this group. This study is aimed at understanding the character of African PCCs in the African continent. This will be achieved by investigating how this movement crosses national boundaries and negotiates religious space within the host country and the power relationship that characterises relationships between missionaries and home country colleagues. The study will also examine the overall relevance of the Nigerian transnational movement in Cameroon. Commentators have observed that Nigerian missionaries often lead most Winners' Chapel churches in the cities of foreign countries, with nationals occupying only assistant roles.³³ This is true of Cameroon where Winners' Chapel congregations were established by Cameroonians after which Nigerian missionaries have been sent to lead them as district and national heads. The rationale for the presence of Nigerian missionaries in leadership positions in Cameroon is most likely to preserve Bishop Oyedepo's vision and spiritual power by acting as intermediaries for the successful transmission of his unique charismatic gifts which must not be allowed to dissipate without a temporal power structure. Nigerian missionaries who are proximate to Oyedepo would seem more suitable for this job than Cameroonians who are only benefitting from the 'Mandate', second hand. There is also the problem that a number of Cameroonians who established Winners' Chapel congregations in Cameroon have left to open their

³³ Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa* (London: Hurst & Company, 2015).

own independent ministries because of perceived injustices within the church. It therefore seemed expedient to adopt a multi-sited ethnographic approach, which would aim at contacting key informants for interviews while also participating in some of the activities of the church.

2.4.1. Snowball Sampling

The absence of a reliable statistical estimate of the number of Nigerian Winners' Chapel missionaries and Winners' Chapel congregations in Cameroon and their related activities posed challenges for creating a sampling frame for this study. Besides, it was difficult to come up with a sampling frame for a church that is generally careful in giving out any information about its operations. Another problem is that the missionaries who come from Nigeria are allowed to stay in Cameroon only for two years and then have to return to Nigeria or elsewhere for other assignments. This is a policy of the church, which, according to some informants, keeps the flame of the gospel burning because every pastor is thought to carry a particular 'anointing' or spiritual and other gifts: one can be a good preacher, another a good counsellor, and yet another a good fundraiser. Each time a new pastor comes to the congregation, church members are excited because they are expecting something new from the new pastor.³⁴ This seems to be one missionary strategy which Bishop Oyedepo has adopted and which appears to be working well as some informants were suggesting during my fieldwork.

My research into the operations of this Nigerian transnational church in Cameroon was designed to elicit reliable information about certain practices, including the interactions of the Nigerian leaders with Cameroonian colleagues. Since at the time of my research the church was in court for charges of improper

³⁴ Deaconess Philomena Ekum, Interview (10/01/16), Bamenda.

treatment of the Cameroonian workers by the Nigerian leadership of the church, my research was a sensitive one. Lee has pointed out that ‘sampling becomes more difficult the more sensitive the topic under investigation, since potential informants will have more incentive to conceal their activities’.³⁵ Paul Gifford is therefore sceptical about the use of surveys in constructing research arguments. Gifford claims that ‘in matters like religion, surveys may reveal only the bluntest reality because respondents largely know what is expected of them, and often respond accordingly’.³⁶ For example, nearly every African Christian purports to believe in the existence of heaven and hell, yet Gifford’s findings show that it is the, this-worldly nature of their Christianity that is predominant, and which could easily be missed by scholars making their arguments only from surveys.³⁷ Gifford’s point is salient because it reveals how respondents can deliberately hide evidence when surveys are used in qualitative ethnographic research. One may also add that the strict nature of some Pentecostal churches, which prevents easy access to information about them, means that those who are allowed to respond to interviews could be selected by the church leadership and told how to respond to the interviews. However, the use of surveys in religious ethnography remains significant because the credibility of the research findings might be more convincing when the results emanate from the perceptions of those who are being studied while the researcher corroborates such evidence with participant observation and other texts that may be related to the subject matter. During the seven-month period of research in Cameroon, the National Pastor, who is a Nigerian, did not grant any personal interviews. He claimed that he needed authorisation from the leadership of the church in Nigeria in order to do so. However, the National Pastor instructed some of his pastors and leaders to grant

³⁵ Raymond Lee, *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics* (London: Sage, 1993), 60.

³⁶ Gifford, *Christianity, Development*, 6-7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

interviews. But I also had several informal conversations with him in his office, which proved to be relevant in providing information that was useful for this study. David Maxwell recommends that both historical and ethnographic research methods are necessary in order for researchers properly to capture the shifts within Pentecostalism across time and space and to adequately apprehend the immensely varied nature of the movement.³⁸

In sociological research, when scholars are unable to access a sampling frame within the population from which to collect the sample and there is difficulty in creating one, snowball sampling is the only worthwhile alternative.³⁹ Lee explains that ‘in snowballing sampling the researcher starts from an initial set of contacts and is then passed on by them to others, who in turn refer others and so on’.⁴⁰ This was particularly helpful for my research because through this method I was led to some key informants, one of whom in addition to several conversations and an interview, gave me some valuable documents/correspondence of the church. However, snowballing can produce samples that are relatively uniform making it problematic to make internal comparisons within cases. Seal therefore suggests that sampling within a case study guards against the assumption that views gained from one vantage point are representative of the whole. The researcher needs to keep track of and control referral chains, perhaps identifying specific kinds of respondents who would clarify emerging theoretical formulations.⁴¹ My own oral sources of information as a Cameroonian meant that I could facilitate my investigations through the support of other Cameroonians who were either serving as pastors or other

³⁸ David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism and the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 213.

³⁹ Sara Arber, ‘Designing samples’, *Researching Social life 2* (2001): 58-82; Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁴⁰ Lee, *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics*, 65.

⁴¹ Clive Seale, ‘Quality in qualitative research’, *Qualitative Inquiry* 5, no. 4 (1999): 465-478.

leaders or attending Winners' Chapel in Cameroon as members. I started from the networks and contacts I had established on my preparatory visits to Cameroon in October and November 2014. I had maintained communication with a number of contacts after returning to Edinburgh that year and continued to receive information about the church before returning in September 2015. When I arrived Cameroon in September 2015, I first got in touch with these initial contacts. From the latter, I moved on to networks I had never known before. Through snowballing, I selected different people from widely different locations and with useful information for interviews, so that the complexity of Winners' Chapel PCC and its power dynamics in Cameroon are adequately represented in this study.

2.5. Methods for Generating Data

The main methods for generating data in this study involved the use of in-depth interviews and participant observation. This research constitutes the following data sources: church members of Winners' Chapel, pastors, and missionaries from Nigeria, elders, deacons, deaconesses and those who are not members of the church but attend occasional events organised by the church such as the yearly Shiloh event organised every December. It also involves texts, letters, memoranda, and events. From data generation based on individual interviews and participant observation in key settings, it was possible to identify the historical antecedents and patterns of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon, analyse the experiences of the church members/Cameroonian Winners' Chapel pastors and investigate patterns of power within the church. Some of the analysis of the historical data and patterns of power in Winners' Chapel from participant observation and other data sources suggests a certain level of consistency, but also inconsistencies and contradictions in some practices of Winners' Chapel during its 20-year period of existence in Cameroon. For

example, throughout the 20-year period of existence of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon, Nigerian missionaries have consistently been sent from Nigeria to serve as national leaders of the church in Cameroon. However, there are at least two conflicting documents, which show the number of Winners' Chapel workers in Cameroon and their years of entry. One document claims that there are only 78 workers in the church in Cameroon with the first recruit joining in 2012, meanwhile the other reveals that there are in fact 182 workers of the church in Cameroon with the first recruit joining in 1996. Levitt and Schiller were insightful when they postulated that participant observation and ethnographic interviewing allow researchers to document how persons preserve and 'shed cultural repertoires and identities, interact within a location and across its boundaries, and act in ways that are in concert with or contradict their values over time'.⁴²

2.5.1. Semi-structured Interviews

Unlike survey-based interviews, which tend to follow a structured format in the form of questionnaires, the semi-structured interview pattern involves loosely planned open-ended questions. For this study, the semi-structured interviews aimed to uncover the character of transnational APCCs in Africa with a focus on the leaders and significant members of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. The semi-structured interview questions were therefore used as a guide to gather the primary data so that the demographic information obtained through the interview questions would be used for analytical purposes.⁴³ Open-ended questions were administered to the respondents in order not to assume the reasons for the emergence, operation and power dynamics of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. This is usually a problem when

⁴² Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller, 'Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society', *International Migration Review* 38, no. 3 (2004): 1002-1007.

⁴³ A copy of the semi-structured guide questions for this study is provided in appendix A.

closed-ended questions are used. The open-ended questions allowed the respondents freely to express their views about Winners' Chapel in Cameroon in the context of mission. Indeed, if closed-ended questions, which are often associated with formal interviews, had been used, certain important areas would not have been included in the questions. But some of the responses from the open-ended questions opened up new vistas of thought, which often triggered a need for further interrogation. For example, one issue that seemed intriguing was about the percentage of total income sent to Nigeria from the church in Cameroon or received by the church in Cameroon from Nigeria. This issue was important because it could provide insights into the relevance of the church in Cameroon and the support network that is in place for sustaining the daughter Cameroonian church. It would also reveal whether Winners' Chapel in Nigeria is providing any resources from Nigeria to empower the church in Cameroon or whether in fact the reverse takes place. However, during an interview with one of the local Finance Committee Chairpersons of the church in Douala, I was able to get answers to this question as I kept probing him with other questions about financial transactions between Winners' Chapel Cameroon and the headquarters Church in Nigeria. His revelation that at least 40 per cent of the total income received by the church in Cameroon from Cameroonians is sent to Nigeria, including all tithes collected was informative.

35 interviews were conducted over a period of seven months consisting of two periods of fieldwork. The first phase spanned the period October–November 2014 and the second, September 2015–February 2016. The majority of respondents were middle-aged and married with children. Of the 35 respondents, 23 were men and 12 women. 20 interviews were conducted in Douala and the other 13 in Buea, Bamenda and Yaoundé. Of the 35 interviewees, 20 were clergy of Winners' Chapel

in Cameroon, 3 of whom were Nigerian missionaries. 10 were lay leaders including elders, deacons and deaconesses of Winners' Chapel Cameroon and 5 ordinary members of the church. Of the clergy interviewed 2 were part-time/assistant pastors. The interview sessions often began with me asking the respondent to relate a brief history of his/her conversion story from where we moved on to his/her involvement with, and perceptions about, several aspects of the church. Further leads were then followed in the course of our conversation.

It proved difficult to represent both genders equally in this research because most of the leaders are male while most of the church members are female. Since I was more interested in interviewing the church leaders and only a handful of church members, the result is that more men than women have been interviewed for this study. Seventy-five per cent were male and twenty-five per cent female.⁴⁴ Of this group only one female pastor was interviewed.⁴⁵ A purposive sampling technique was used to select the interviewees. The underlying intention was to find respondents from different categories, probing differences within this transnational church in terms of conversion narratives, missionary motivations and strategies of the church and patterns of power. I also probed into questions regarding the relationship between Nigerian missionaries and Cameroonian indigenous pastors, and the relevance of the church. Due to the voluntary nature of the study and in cognisance of the ethics governing the research, I decided to select members who volunteered to participate in the research but who had the knowledge and experience that was

⁴⁴ Interviews were conducted in Cameroon (Douala, Buea, Bamenda, Yaoundé) in October-November 2014 and from September 2015 to February 2016.

⁴⁵ It seems to me that the Winners' Chapel does not generally promote the idea of female pastors. This perception resulted from a conversation I had with an interpreter and deaconess of the church in Yaoundé. When I mentioned that I had interviewed one of their female pastors in Wum-Bamenda, she quickly told me that women were not allowed to preach in the Winners Chapel and so cannot be pastors!

required and could make time to grant interviews.⁴⁶ Although I had an interview guide, respondents were encouraged to tell their stories in response to open-ended questions based on the following themes: biographical details, historiography of the church in Cameroon, leadership and power, the respective roles of Nigerian missionaries and Cameroonian indigenous pastors, transnational politics, and socioeconomic and religious relevance.

With the exception of two respondents (pastors) in Douala and one in Bamenda who opted not to be recorded during the interview, all participants granted me permission to record their interviews. The Ipad4, which I used to record these interviews, was very helpful in registering accurate responses of the interviewees. It also helped in the safeguarding of the data and facilitated crosschecking of the most important information. In addition to the tape-recording, some hand-written notes were taken of the most salient points in order to facilitate the creation of themes. In order to ensure that the precise opinions expressed by the participants were obtained, I relied on the tape recordings and the hand-written notes in transcribing the data. Each interview session took at least thirty minutes. The longest was sixty-five minutes. The interviews were held in respondents' homes, workplace, church premises and where I lived in Cameroon during fieldwork. Apart from copies of the consent forms and the semi-structured question guides, which were presented to the National Pastor of Winners' Chapel and all subsequent pastors and informants, all other research material has been securely preserved. I uploaded the raw data on my computer MacBook and secured it with a password. I personally did all the transcriptions to make sure that the views articulated by the participants would be

⁴⁶ Janice Morse, 'Designing Funded Qualitative Research', in Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), 228.

properly accounted for in the analysis in this study. All interviews were conducted in English and tape-recorded, transcribed and analysed.

From the sample I obtained about Winners' Chapel, Cameroonians have been working with the church in Cameroon since its creation in 1996 and the most recent recruit was in 2013. Although there is evidence that Cameroonians have been serving in Winners' Chapel since its creation and now number over 170 workers, an official document of the church that was submitted to the National Insurance Company (CNPS)⁴⁷ for calculation of Social Insurance Fund claimed that the first Cameroonian only started serving the church in Cameroon in 2012. It was quite surprising to see that the church administrator who compiled these lists was happy to indicate that he was recruited to work with the church in 2012 when actually he has been serving the church since 2002. This was a very surprising discovery, which suggests one instance of unfair treatment of Cameroonian indigenous workers of the church by the church's Nigerian leadership in Cameroon. The fact that the Nigerian leadership declines to contribute to the National Insurance fund of Cameroonian workers means that upon retirement, the later will have no retirement benefits. However, most recent evidence suggests that in 2016, the church decided to register its workers with the National Insurance Fund because of pressure on the Winners' Chapel authorities in Cameroon from the responsible authorities of CNPS after consistent reports from the Cameroonian indigenous workers. In a letter from the National office of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon to all indigenous Cameroonian workers, dated 12th May 2016, the workers were provided with a form and asked to fill in their details leaving out the following information to be filled by the Nigerian

⁴⁷ The National Social Insurance Fund ensures, within the framework of the general policy of the Government, the various benefits provided in the legislation of social protection and the family. Available at: http://www.cnps.cm/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=79&Itemid=98&lang=en: (Accessed 22/02/17).

leadership: Date of employment if employed before 2010, the total number of years employed with the church and the gross salary.⁴⁸ Most indigenous workers of the church have refused to fill out the forms because they believe that by asking them to leave out important details such as their years of entry and total number of years spent as workers in the church including their actual salaries, the Nigerian leadership intends to fill these details themselves so as to reduce the number of years Cameroonians have worked with Winners' Chapel in Cameroon and their actual salaries. This would mean that the total amount of money to be paid by the Nigerian leadership for the social security of Cameroonians would be incorrect to the disadvantage of the later.⁴⁹

My identity as a Cameroonian and an ordained minister of the PCC researching a Nigerian transnational Pentecostal church meant that I had to negotiate my position during the research both as an insider - a Cameroonian - and as an outsider - neither a Pentecostal nor a Nigerian. Gaining the trust of informants and establishing a rapport with them was therefore important before interviewing the respondents. Some scholars argue that interaction between researchers and the researched is valuable in ethnographic research⁵⁰ probably because it develops trustworthiness between the latter and the former. Yet, other scholars suggest that researchers need to allow a reasonable degree of detachment from respondents so as to be able to gather and examine their data.⁵¹ My constant visits to the church sites and participation in activities of the church initially created an atmosphere of trust. Some of the pastors were also helpful in asking those members and significant

⁴⁸ Memo, from National Office, Douala-Cameroon to all Mission Stations, 'CNPS Identification', May 12th 2016.

⁴⁹ Pastor Mathias Fung, Interview (22/03/17), Douala.

⁵⁰ Ann Oakley, *Experiments in Knowing: Gender and Method in Social Research* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000).

⁵¹ Nigel Fielding, 'Ethnography', in Gilbert N, *Researching Social Life* (London: Sage Publications, 2001).

leaders I had selected to interview to cooperate with me. I endeavoured to overcome any prejudices I might have had about the transnational Pentecostal movement in my home country by using methodological tools such as interviews which allowed informants to share their views freely. Through continued participation in church events, I learned to appreciate people on their own terms and I have tried to relate the findings in this study in the same way. However, the use of a tape-recorder was initially uncomfortable for some respondents, especially the leaders. For example, one of the Finance Committee chairmen of a local congregation who is in his late forties, and claims to be aware of the financial transactions and statistics of the Winners' Chapel in Cameroon and how it relates to Nigeria was very keen that I should not quote him anywhere in my work. Although I had established contact with the chairman and visited him on several occasions, he told me just before we began our interview that he hoped I was not going to use the information against him or the church. I was able to convince him that a certain level of confidentiality was possible in the event of publishing the thesis. For that reason, I have used pseudonyms in this study, except where stated otherwise, in order to conceal the identity of some respondents as requested by them. I returned to Edinburgh from Cameroon with voluminous materials made up of interview transcripts and notes taken during observation, which have been organised for understanding of the data. On return to Edinburgh, I immediately started transcription and coding of the qualitative data in order to organise the data into manageable patterns.

Birgit Byrne has suggested that interviews are not only a form of communication but also a means of extracting different forms of information from

individuals and groups.⁵² An interview with its face-to-face character is able to reveal the personal and private self of the subject.⁵³ Interviews therefore provide space for social encounters where speakers collaborate in producing retrospective and prospective accounts or versions of their past or future actions, experiences, feelings and thoughts.⁵⁴

2.5.2. Participant Observation

Participant observation was one of the key research methods employed in gathering data for this study. Participant observation is generally described as a research method in which the researcher immerses him/herself in ‘a social context with the aim of uncovering through an empathic understanding the meaning and systems of participants in that social context and hence to see the world from their point of view’.⁵⁵ Using questionnaires often assumes that the researcher already knows what is important, but participant observation makes no firm assessment of what is important. Although, participant observation may seem to be a method that lacks structure or guidelines, it is less likely to lead the researcher into imposing his or her own views of social reality.⁵⁶ This method was employed at the social and religious events that I attended in Cameroon. For example, I attended several outreach evangelisation programmes with members of the church in Bamenda and Douala in 2014 and 2015 respectively.

⁵² Bridget Byrne, ‘Qualitative Interviewing’, in Clive Seale (ed.) *Researching Society and Culture*, 2nd edition (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 180.

⁵³ Paul Atkinson and David Silverman (eds.) ‘Kundera’s Immortality: The interview of Society and the invention of the Self’, *Qualitative Inquiry* 3, no. 3 (1997): 309.

⁵⁴ John Rapley, ‘The art (fullness) of Open-Ended Interviewing: Some Considerations on Analysing Interviews’, *Qualitative Research* 1, no. 3 (2001): 303-323.

⁵⁵ Alan Bryman and Robert Burgess, *Qualitative Research Vol. 2, Methods of Qualitative Research* (London: Sage, 1999).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

In devising the research design, particular attention was paid to issues that were most relevant to the research questions in the context of Cameroon and where one would find answers. The findings were centred on the transnational and power dynamics of the church as they operated from Nigeria to Cameroon and within Cameroon. All the events attended were in church premises except when church members went out to the city centres for evangelism and during Satellite Fellowships, which take place on Saturdays at designated homes of some church leaders. Each Winners' Chapel congregation is divided into several Satellite Fellowship groups. For example, Ndogbong alone has 35 Satellite Fellowship groups operating in the homes of selected leaders of the church.⁵⁷

I participated in a number of activities including: evangelistic outreaches into the communities, all-night prayers ('One Night with the King'), Communion Services, Believers Foundation Classes, First Timers' Meetings for new converts, Satellite Fellowship Meetings, distribution of handbills and the yearly annual meeting of the church called Shiloh- which takes place every December in Nigeria and is broadcast through satellite images in Cameroon and elsewhere. During this time, I also observed normal Sunday services, and a marriage ceremony in Buea. Apart from Douala, I occasionally visited other regions where the church exists as outlined in the introduction to this study. In each of the places visited I participated in several activities and interviewed other people. For example, in Wum of the North West Region, I participated in an Impartation Service⁵⁸ and interviewed the only female pastor of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon.

⁵⁷ Winners' Chapel International, Ndogbong-Douala, 'Winners' Chapel Satellite Fellowship Centres'. A Handbill containing details of Satellite Fellowship Locations in Ndogbong.

⁵⁸ An impartation service in the understanding of Winners' Chapel is a ritual ceremony in which one handkerchief, which is believed by Winners' Chapel members to come from Bishop Oyedepo is used by members of the church for impartation of spiritual and other blessings. Each member of the church

2.5.3. Informal Conversations

I held several informal conversations with twenty people during the research period. At least two pastors and three ordinary members, who had previously been interviewed, participated in the informal conversations but the other fifteen were completely different from the group of interviewees. These included other pastors of the church, elders, deacons, deaconesses and members of the laity, many of whom demanded anonymity. In addition to this group are non-members of the church who attend religious activities of the church such as the annual Shiloh event. Non-Winners' Chapel members who participated in these conversations included a pastor of the RCCG congregation, which shares the same building with Winners' Chapel Bonaberi-Douala. A responsible leader of the church with whom I shared several hours of conversation demanded that he must not be quoted anywhere. While these discussions were not tape-recorded, hand-written notes were taken and full reconstructions were made after the meetings. Information from these informal conversations was used in much the same way as information from the interviews so that the evidence presented in this study about the character of transnational Pentecostal churches in Africa and their power dynamics especially from Nigeria to Cameroon constitutes evidence from varying sources and so is reliable and significant.

is encouraged to bring a separate handkerchief to church or buy one from the church on the day of impartation. During the service, members touch the handkerchief from the Bishop on their foreheads and then on their own handkerchiefs in order to transfer the blessings. It is believed that spiritual power is transmitted from Bishop Oyedepo to his adherents this way and all their problems fade away.

2.6. Documentary Research

Other sources of information for ethnographic enquiry involve the data that is collected from sources other than observation, interviews and discussions.

2.6.1. Printed Sources: Information was collected through content analysis of printed sources such as books written by Bishop Oyedepo, memoranda and tracts/handbills. These items were either collected from the churches and individuals during participant observation or bought from Winners' Chapel shops that are often located in their church premises.

2.6.2. Books by Bishop Oyedepo: The founder-leader and presiding Bishop of Winners' Chapel has written over sixty books most of which are centred on prosperity, health and wealth. Winners' Chapel owns a publishing company called the Dominion Publishing House (DPH). It is responsible for publishing all the books of Oyedepo and other literature of the church in Nigeria. I have provided more insights about DPH in chapter 3 of this study.

2.6.3 Memoranda: These are correspondence mostly between the Nigerian leadership in Cameroon and the Cameroonian indigenous pastors. A total of seven memos relating information on some key aspects of the church were collected and used for this research. Some of the subjects of the memos include: the foreign mission's deployment of pastors; dismissal from the pastorate; instructions about the transmission of tithes and offerings into the church's bank account; and warnings to Cameroonian indigenous pastors of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. I also collected copies of letters written by Cameroonian indigenous Winners' Chapel pastors to Cameroonian State authorities complaining about mistreatment by Nigerian missionaries. There are also some replies to such letters and counter-arguments from

the State authorities and the Nigerian missionaries. There are also dismissal and suspension letters sent to some Cameroonian pastors from the International Office of Missions of Winners' Chapel in Goshen-Lagos.

2.6.4. Statistics: Documents containing statistics of the number of Winners' Chapel Congregations in Cameroon were collected and used in this research. There are also documents which detail the number of part-time and full-time pastors serving the church in Cameroon, their various stations and respective years of recruitment into Winners' Chapel. As already noted, some of these documents contain contradictory information about the number of Cameroonians serving Winners' Chapel in Cameroon and their years of entry.

2.6.5. The Mandate: The Mandate is a 504-page book (including the index), which was written by David Oyedepo, the founder-leader of Winners' Chapel and published in 2012 by DPH. It is the operational manual of the church and describes how God called, empowered and sent out Oyedepo into ministry. The book details the structural organisation of local and international churches and prescribes how Winners' Chapel churches need to function throughout the world.

2.6.6. Tracts/Handbills: More than forty-five tracts/handbills were collected in Cameroon during fieldwork and they formed part of the collection of primary data for this research. The tracts are often produced in different congregations of Winners' Chapel Cameroon and they carry testimonies of members depending on the program or activity they wish to advertise. Usually there are testimonies of healing, job or marital breakthrough and other supernatural experiences of church members. Tracts are meant to be evangelistic in the sense that such supernatural experience that have been enjoyed by the church members could also be realised by the new members

they are trying to recruit. The key aspects of these tracts are the testimonies. One of the questions to be pursued in this research is ‘Who are the people behind the testimonies that are related to Cameroonians in Cameroon and what role do testimonies play in the mission of the church in Cameroon?’

2.6.7. Internet Texts: Winners’ Chapel in Cameroon does not have its own website but for this research the church’s official website at Canaanland in Nigeria has been consulted and used.⁵⁹

2.7. Coding of the Qualitative Data

Codes or categories are tags or labels used for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study and coding involves subdividing the data as well as assigning categories.⁶⁰ Coding is important because it enables the researcher to identify important phenomena, collect examples of such phenomena and analyse the phenomena in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns and structures.⁶¹ The codes developed from the qualitative data for this study related to the three main aims of the study:

- To investigate the reasons for the transnationalisation and emergence of the Winners’ Chapel in Cameroon.
- To investigate the power dynamics of Winners’ Chapel especially within the context of relationships between Nigerian Winners’ Chapel missionaries and their Cameroonian indigenous colleagues in Cameroon.

⁵⁹ David Oyedepo, ‘Faith Tabernacle, Canaanland, Otta, Living Faith Church Worldwide A.K.A Winners’ Chapel International’. World Headquarters, available at: <http://faithtabernacle.org.ng/>: (Accessed 23/02/17).

⁶⁰ Tehmina Basit, ‘Manual or electronic? The Role of Coding in Qualitative Data Analysis’, *Educational Research* 45, no. 2 (2003): 144.

⁶¹ Ibid.

- To investigate in what ways Winners' Chapel provides social capital and empowers Cameroonians.

2.7.1. Data Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data remains one of the most difficult tasks of researchers because it is not fundamentally a mechanical or technical exercise but often a dynamic, intuitive, creative process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorising.⁶²

Unlike in most quantitative research where there is usually a division of labour between data collectors and data analysts, qualitative researchers collect and analyse their own data.⁶³ One reason for this is to enable the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of what he/she has studied and continually refine their interpretations as they analyse the data.⁶⁴ This explains why qualitative researchers often rely on first-hand experience with settings, informants, or documents to interpret their data.⁶⁵

One of the most important aims of analysing qualitative data is to find the categories, relationships and assumptions that inform the respondent's view of the world in general, and of the topic in particular.⁶⁶

There are at least two main strategies of qualitative data analysis: analytic induction; and grounded theory.⁶⁷ Analytic induction involves a hypothesis of the phenomena in which the researcher seeks universal explanations of the phenomena being studied by collecting data until such a time when no cases that are inconsistent

⁶² Ibid, 144-146

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Steven Taylor and Robert Bogdan, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods* (New York: John Wiley, 1998).

⁶⁶ Grant McCracken, *The Long Interview*, Vol. 13 (Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1988).

⁶⁷ Nicola Green, 'Disrupting the Field: Virtual Reality Technologies and 'Multisited' Ethnographic Methods', *The American Behavioural Scientist* 43, no. 3 (1999): 409-421, 1999.

with the hypothetical explanation of the phenomena are found.⁶⁸ Grounded theory on the other hand involves the generation of theory from data.⁶⁹ Through the use of theoretical sampling and coding, grounded theory aims at developing concepts, categories, hypothesis and substantive theory.⁷⁰ Data analysis techniques are based on segmenting, coding and categorising the data in order to find and conceptualise regularities in the data.⁷¹ However, they could potentially ‘decontextualise’ and fragment the data.⁷² That explains why a narrative approach has been adopted as the main method of generating data in this study including some core processes of grounded theory such as memoranda. I have also allowed theoretical ideas from the data to emerge in the interpretations because narrative analysis deals with the search for and analysis of stories that people use to understand their lives and the world around them.⁷³ Four models of narrative analysis are distinguishable: thematic analysis, structural analysis, interactional analysis, and performative analysis.⁷⁴ This study follows a thematic analysis where emphases are laid on the participants’ perceptions, feelings and experiences as dominant objects of study. This allows the respondent to discuss the topic in their own words, free of constraints from fixed-response questions found in quantitative studies. Thematic analyses also emphasise what people say rather than how it is said.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Bryman, ‘The Debate about Quantitative and Qualitative Research’, in Alan Bryman and R. G. Burgess (eds.) *Qualitative Research, Volume 2, Methods of Qualitative Research* (London: Sage Publication, 1999), 35-69.

⁶⁹ Barney Glaser and Strauss Anselm, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (New York: Transaction Publishers, 2009).

⁷⁰ Alan Bryman, ‘The Debate about Quantitative and Qualitative Research: A Question of Method or Epistemology?’ *British Journal of Sociology* (1984): 75-92.

⁷¹ Punch Keith, *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches, 2nd Edition* (London: Sage Publications, 2013), 216.

⁷² Dominic Pasura Mazorodze, ‘A Fractured Diaspora’, 88.

⁷³ Bryman, ‘The Debate about Quantitative and Qualitative Research’, 412.

⁷⁴ Keith, *Introduction to Social Research*, 216.

⁷⁵ Dominic Pasura Mazorodze, ‘A fractured diaspora’, 89-90.

During in-depth interviews and participant observation, I aimed to identify stable features and patterns that emerged from the data and used them as a starting point to probe into the historiographical and other issues of power concerning Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. The recurrence of particular stories and narratives from many respondents across different sites and congregations indicated some emerging themes. For example, some of the themes that emerged were: Nigerian Winners' Chapel missionaries to Cameroon, power and powerlessness, testimonies of power, transnational media, church planting, and importance of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon.

In *The Sociological Imagination*, Wright Mills has suggested that one of the aims of sociological research is to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar. Mills also posits that sociological research 'consists of the capacity to shift from one perspective to another and in the process to build up an adequate view of a total society and its components'.⁷⁶ During fieldwork in Cameroon I encountered some shocking moments which provided additional perspectives to the research. For example, it was intriguing to notice that some respondents referred to Winners' Chapel in Cameroon as part of a 'Nigerian Mafia'.⁷⁷ This comment is derogatory because it suggests that the Nigerian Winners' Chapel might be exercising a hidden sinister influence in Cameroon and on Cameroonians. But this critique of a church with ostensible spiritual motives of evangelisation in Cameroon brings to mind similar observations about Nigerian transnational churches elsewhere. For example, when Kim Knibbe studied the transnationalisation of the Nigerian RCCG in the Netherlands, he found that, while the church saw itself as being on mission to claim Amsterdam for Christ, some media and police as well as certain local politicians

⁷⁶ C. Wright Mills, *The sociological imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1-2.

⁷⁷ Pastor Titus Ngah, Interview (02/02/16) Douala.

preferred to see Amsterdam South East as a hotbed for Nigerian criminals and money laundering.⁷⁸ Other scholars have pointed out how Nigerians are regularly associated in the media and elsewhere with crime, be it in the realm of questionable moral standards or in the occult.⁷⁹ What this means in the context of this study is that Winners' Chapel-a Nigerian Pentecostal church in Cameroon risks being interpreted in ways that are very different from its professed motives of mission and evangelisation across intra-continental boundaries. Another surprise was in discovering a number of contradictory responses as to the real motives of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon and whether or not the church was beneficial to the Cameroonian society in its transnational operations. Having identified these surprises, I developed them into coherent themes for analysis.

The computer-assisted data analysis software program called NVivo aided analysis of data. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis computer software package. It has been designed for qualitative researchers working with very rich text-based and/or multimedia information, where deep levels of analysis on small or large volumes of data are required. I started using NVivo in 2014 during my first trip to Cameroon for fieldwork and continued when I returned to Edinburgh in February 2016. In-depth interviews and ethnographic material from research sites were the main sources of data so they were kept as individual files. NVivo allows data to be integrated into the project and assists to link it to external material such as books, audio or Internet pages, which are relevant to the research project. This made it easy to retrieve and manipulate files without sifting through lots of paper.

⁷⁸ Kim Knibbe, 'We did not come here as tenants, but as landlords': Nigerian Pentecostals and the Power of Maps', *African Diaspora* 2, no. 2 (2009): 149.

⁷⁹ Afe Adogame, 'Contesting the ambivalences of modernity in a global context: The Redeemed Christian Church of God, North America', *Studies in World Christianity* 10, no. 1 (2004): 25-48.

CHAPTER THREE

Research on African Pentecostalism and Transnationalism: An Overview of Relevant Scholarship/Theoretical Framework

3.1. General Overview of Scholarship on African Pentecostal Transnationalism

During the last few decades, there has been an unprecedented upsurge in scholarship on African Pentecostalism and religious transnationalism, possibly because of the multiplication of these movements in local and global contexts. This situation seems to echo earlier predictions of a new worldwide religious resurgence emanating from Africa. Scholars such as David Barrett predicted that the rapid growth of Christianity in Africa was a sign that Christianity could become a non-western religion in the near future.¹ Eighteen years later, Andrew Walls would posit that African Christianity ought to be recognised as potentially representative of the Christianity twenty-first century. Walls argued that:

The Christianity typical of the twenty-first century will be shaped by the events and processes that take place in the Southern continents, and above all by those that take place in Africa ... The things by which people recognize and judge what Christianity is will (for good or ill) increasingly be determined in Africa. The characteristic doctrines, liturgy, the ethical codes, the social applications of the faith will increasingly be those prominent in Africa. New agendas for theology will appear in Africa.²

The evidence for this in the form of the number of Africans who convert to Christianity both in Africa and elsewhere, and the number of churches that are created to accommodate them, in contrast to the corresponding decline in organised Christianity in the northern hemisphere, seems compelling. Asamoah-Gyadu has written of how cinema halls, nightclubs and mosques are being converted into

¹ David B. Barrett, 'AD 2000, 350 Million Christians in Africa', *International Review of Missions* 53, no. 233 (1970): 39.

² Andrew Walls, 'Africa in Christian History: Retrospect and Prospect', *Journal of African Christian Thought* 1, no. 1 (June 1998): 2.

churches in Africa while the reverse is happening in Europe, owing to the impact of secularization.³ But Christianity in Africa is not only growing, it is also moving, driven by the passion for mission and evangelism. As Ruth Marshall-Fratani expresses it more generally: ‘all world religions are transnational, but Christianity in particular... has at its core an evangelical message which is to be spread to all peoples, and which seeks to impose a truth which subordinates all other forms of allegiance and identification.’⁴ There is significant evidence for arguing that African Pentecostal movements are making inroads both into the intra-African and inter-continental Diasporic contexts. While some scholars of African religion or Pentecostalism continue to celebrate this new worldwide religious resurgence from Africa, which seems determinative for world Christianity in the 21st century,⁵ others are sceptical about the nature of this Christianity and its actual potential to salvage the socio-political, and cultural quagmires that continue to litter the African landscape with the debris of ‘dysfunctional neo-colonial political systems’.⁶ Paul Gifford argues that, despite the evidence for the multiplication of Christian discipleship in Africa in the form of David Barrett’s statistic of 22,800 Africans becoming Christians every day, what ought to be considered important is the nature, role and significance of this form of Christianity.⁷

Gifford’s consistent downplaying of the role of APCCs in addressing the socio-political needs of the continent has met with fierce criticism from scholars who find evidence that some of his claims are relatively slanted and unrepresentative of

³ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics: Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 10.

⁴ Marshall-Fratani, ‘Mediating the Global and the Local’, 278.

⁵ Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003).

⁶ Paul Gifford, ‘Trajectories in African Christianity,’ *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 8, no. 4 (2008): 275-276.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 276.

the real motivations of these churches. Thus Ogbu Kalu could title his reflection, ‘Yabbing the Pentecostals: Paul Gifford’s Image of Ghana’s New Christianity’, challenging Gifford’s pessimism and criticism of the movement’s missionary engagements.⁸ Using Ghana as *pars pro toto* for the African continent, Gifford had argued that Africa’s ills result from self-interest on the part of those in power, the lack of good governance and the desire by African leaders to cling to power. Within this Afro-pessimistic analysis of the continent, Gifford maintains that Pentecostalism’s message of success, wealth and status is incapable of mobilising social capital and the political economy, and has therefore failed to help propel Ghana into the world’s modern economic system.⁹ Kalu acknowledges the depth and insights of Gifford’s research but argues that Gifford’s evidence for African Pentecostalism’s lack of initiatives to propel the continent into the global sphere derives from a single source, namely the media, and is therefore myopic.¹⁰ According to Kalu, a church ought to be known as ‘*sign, foretaste, and witness* of the reign of God in communities through its *being, saying and doing*; therefore the three dimensions should be studied holistically’.¹¹ Kalu further maintains that social scientists have often (and rather unfortunately) limited themselves to research on the content and mode of transmission of the messages of Pentecostal churches through the exploitation of modern media technology, thereby limiting attention to their dependence on the west or what he calls ‘ecclesiastical externality’.¹² By so doing, they have neglected the appreciation of the adherents and grassroots initiatives of the movements.

⁸ Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004), quoted in Wilhemina J. Kalu, Nimi Wariboko and Toyin Falola (eds.) *The Collected Essays of Ogbu Kalu, African Pentecostalism: Global Discourses, Migration, Exchange and Connections* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2010), 148-62.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

At the same time as these arguments encapsulate methodological concerns with respect to how researchers should approach studies in religion, they also question the actual relevance of Pentecostal churches in Africa, where socio-economic and political challenges remain unabated. Jehu Hanciles comments that African Christianity is imbued with the capacity to adapt to shifting socio-political contexts by constantly reconfiguring its religious maps in order to create a link between physical realities and spiritual need in contexts of hopelessness and, often, destitution.¹³ Hanciles situates the rise of Pentecostal churches in Africa within the framework of overpopulated cities pregnant with socioeconomic problems, which provide a substratum for evangelistic crusades and the resonance of material prosperity. However, he is critical of the irrationality of the building of megachurches at very huge cost by some of these movements while those they supposedly hope to reach languish in abject poverty.¹⁴

There lies the ambiguity inherent in the African Pentecostalist missionary discourse, especially with respect to their prevalent prosperity gospel which, even its preaching, is so often backed up with the promises of health and wealth, but nevertheless seems utopic. This is because a majority of Africans, including many adherents of this form of Christianity, are still living below the poverty line and are prey to disease and other misfortunes. The *raison d'être* of these movements sometimes eludes our grasp despite their claim to implacable antagonism to the secularism prevalent elsewhere. This provides those working in World Christianity with a timely reminder of the need for continuous reinvestigations and reappraisal.

¹³ Jehu Hanciles, 'Interpreting Contemporary Christianity: Global Processes and Local Identities', in Ogbu Kalu and Alaine M. Low (eds.) *Interpreting Contemporary Christianity: Global Processes and Local Identities, Studies in the History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans 2008), 84.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 85-86.

One scholar who has significantly noted a shift in the understanding of the prosperity gospel in Pentecostalism is Naomi Haynes. In her studies of Pentecostalism in the Zambian Copperbelt, Haynes found that, when Pentecostal adherents failed to realise the much acclaimed wealth often espoused by prosperity gospel preachers, they developed another understanding of prosperity which is ‘characterised not by uniform, individualised wealth, but rather by progress along a gradient of material achievement through relationships that span differences in economic status’.¹⁵ According to Haynes, this new perspective in the understanding of the prosperity gospel serves to intermix Pentecostals into the broader Pentecostal universes of discourse about prosperity where material inequality and the promotion of wealth are displayed.¹⁶ Haynes’ study is important because it shows that some major Pentecostal tenets are continuously being reconfigured in order to make APCCs relevant and timeless in interpreting the everyday circumstances of their adherents. But this very important shift in the understanding of prosperity in African Pentecostalism can surely prove useful for understanding the Pentecostal missionary praxis of APCCs in Africa and elsewhere.

Some scholars have noted the missionary character of APCCs to the North. Some have even referred to the presence of non-western forms of Christianity in the western world, as the ‘Southernisation of European Christianity.’¹⁷ But if the aggressive evangelistic strategies adopted by APCCs in the African Diaspora are intended to ‘remake Europe and Europeans in the image of Christ,’¹⁸ what then is the

¹⁵ Naomi Haynes, ‘Pentecostalism and the Morality of Money: Prosperity, Inequality, and Religious Sociality on the Zambian Copperbelt’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18, no. 1 (2012): 1.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Philip Jenkins, *God’s Continent: Christianity, Islam and Europe’s Religious Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 91.

¹⁸ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, ‘To the Ends of the Earth’: Mission, Migration and the Impact of African-led Pentecostal Churches in the European Diaspora’, *Mission Studies* 29, no. 1 (2012): 26.

motivation for APCCs in traversing national boundaries in the African continent, which is as a result regarded as the new global theatre for missionary Christianity? In the pages that follow, I will suggest an answer to that question in terms of the close nexus that APCCs believe to exist between the dissemination of temporal power and the successful transmission of spiritual power.

3.1.1. Intra-African Pentecostalism

Ogbu Kalu's *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* is one of the most succinct and yet comprehensive accounts of the missionary motivations and strategies of APCCs in Africa. He argues that the passion for mission and reevangelisation of the continent was driven by the spiritual drought in Africa and a desire to claim it for Christ.¹⁹ Missionary endeavours by historic mission churches led to the compromising of the gospel in that many churchgoing adherents of biblical Christianity adhere to indigenous religions as well. In this way, they fail to combat the evil spiritual forces that enslave Africans. Pentecostal groups therefore address this unfaithfulness and 'power failure' by using 'charismatic or power evangelism, as well as modern resources such as media and management techniques, in promoting a personal faith commitment to Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit baptism.'²⁰ The result has been the explosive growth of African Pentecostalism, especially in the 1990s. But the impetus of a Pan-African ideology in promoting the spread of Christianity within the continent of Africa has been far from negligible. APCCs' missionary engagements were arguably born in Nigeria and were aimed at liberating the whole of Africa from the clutches of colonialism.²¹ For example, Reuben Ezemadu, the leader of the *Christian Mission Foundation*, noted in the 1977 *Ife declaration* that Nigerian

¹⁹ Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 88.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid, 123.

Christians would go on to bring the gospel to most of the dark places in Africa in order to reverse the stigma imposed on its inhabitants as a dark continent, and to ‘stem the tide of opposition and resentment to white missionaries in Africa’.²² The intercessors for Africa, as some of them were later dubbed, networked throughout the continent in order to present a better image of Africa.²³ Kalu’s work is significant for my study on Pentecostal transnationalism because it provides significant reasons for the cross-border missionary dynamics of APCCs within the continent of Africa, and therefore could be a template for continued research on the subject, especially in Africa.

David Maxwell takes this discussion further by presenting the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (henceforth ZAOGA) as the African transnational movement *par excellence*.²⁴ He weaves together discourses of the movement that encapsulate both spiritual and pan-Africanist dimensions of the motives for their cross-border expansion. Maxwell shows that by the 1990s, the ZAOGA had fully established its strategy for the formation of new churches and its resultant expansion. ‘Small cottage meetings became Home Groups, then ‘Cells,’ and their spread across townships became the ‘chain of multiplication.’²⁵ The churches operate in a form of ecosystem in which there is mutual support to maintain balance and promote growth. For example, the Assemblies of God in Manicaland would support those in Mozambique in monthly and bi-monthly Sunday meetings, while members in Bulawayo would take care of those in Botswana.²⁶ It seems to be the creation of these intricate networks of mutual assistance that have characterised the creation of new ZAOGA church branches and their spread across the continent and beyond.

²² Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 124.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit*, 163-83.

²⁵ Ibid, 166.

²⁶ Ibid, 169.

The Pan-Africanist ideology of ZAOGA could be linked to what Maxwell calls ‘a post-colonial redefinition of mission’.²⁷ Thus the archbishop of ZAOGA trumpets the change of direction in the missionary enterprise by comparing recent African church initiatives with what has been happening in the West: ‘I believe this is our time. It is time for black people and their churches to rise up. Don’t go to Europe and learn their ungodly things. Learn what they used to do before...it is time for Africans to bless Western nations with the true gospel.’²⁸ The argument seems to be that the true church is now in Africa and no longer in the western world, with Africans urged to espouse the authentic gospel and not to copy from a western world, which is sliding into apostasy. But the strategy for mission also informs practice; it is one that prioritises grassroots initiatives: ‘if you want a big church you must have small groups to disciple and to evangelise. Society can only be reached by the people living in that society.’²⁹ David Maxwell’s thesis is thus highly relevant in the search for the missionary motivations and strategies of APCCs.

Three edited volumes, amongst other works dealing with the subject of Pentecostal transnationalism, have been published within the last one and a half decades. Olupona and Gemignani’s edited volume captures the North American religious landscape and demonstrates the complex internal dynamics and external circumstances that shape transnational religious processes.³⁰ The book questions earlier assumptions that migration from Africa to the Diaspora was often prompted by economic and political failures, and argue that religious motives for migration are compelling. Their thesis significantly contributes to the formation of theoretical and

²⁷ Ibid, 170.

²⁸ Ibid, 163.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Jacob Olupona and Regina Gemignani, *African Immigrant Religions in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).

conceptual perspectives on religious transnationalism.³¹ In another volume, edited by Andre Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani, the authors explicate the organisational intricacies that are necessary to promote the expansion of churches across national borders, and investigate issues of identity formation in the transnational space.³² This study makes a further valuable contribution to the interpretation of relationships, loyalty, and contestations that are forged between transnational missionary actors and their receiving country colleagues. It also reveals how issues of identity between two distinct groups affect power dynamics within a transnational movement.

The book edited by Adogame and Spickard deals with transnational networks in Africa and elsewhere. Its contributors identify some models of Pentecostal transnationalism including ‘religious bi-local,’ ‘religious cacophony,’ ‘reverse mission,’ ‘South-South religious trade,’ ‘transnational organisation theory,’ and ‘deterritorialised religious identity.’³³ The present study has benefited from the thesis on the South-South religious trade model. For example, Joel Noret’s fieldwork in Benin, Nigeria and Togo highlights the diversity of movements inherent in the Pentecostal phenomenon as well as the differences among several styles of transnationalisation and multiple forms or types of transnational bonds.³⁴ Such a multi-site research, which involves several groups, provides a somewhat ‘broad-brush’ picture of Pentecostalism as a transnational movement. A perspective on a focused group could provide better evidence for the dynamics of religious transnationalism in specific contexts. The essay in the same volume by Linda Van De Kamp and Rijk Van Dijk demonstrates ‘why and how distinctions between

³¹ Ibid.

³² Corten and Marshall-Fratani (eds.) *Between Babel and Pentecost*.

³³ Afe Adogame and James V. Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries: Transnational Religious and Social Dynamics in Africa and the New African Diaspora* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010).

³⁴ Joel Noret, ‘On the Inscrutability of the Ways of God: The Transnationalisation of Pentecostalism on the West African Coast’, in Adogame and Spickard (eds.) *Religion Crossing Boundaries*, 107.

“religion” and “culture” are of particular concern to Pentecostalism in Africa in the manner in which it relates to transnational migration and mission’.³⁵ They argue that it is fallacious to assume that Pentecostal groups respond to or interact with local cultural contexts in globally uniform ways; they offer instead a myriad of diverse engagements, ritual styles and cross-cultural exchanges.³⁶ Van De Kamp’s and Van Dijk’s study has proved useful for the current thesis in helping to make sense of any ritual styles and cultural exchanges that are embedded in the missionary engagements and socio-religious potential of Winners’ Chapel in Cameroon.

The interplay between religion and social processes has also been articulated by Andre Droogers. He argues that there is a reciprocal link between religion and the surrounding cultures or society because ‘any religion can influence non-religious social processes, just as it too can be influenced by them.’³⁷ The basic questions raised by Droogers, and those that are crucial for this study, are: how does the autonomy of cultures relate to contact between them? Does culture make people (a culturalist view) or do people make culture (a constructivist view)? To what degree is culture homogeneous? How are the universal human and the particular cultural related? Finally, and most importantly, when Pentecostalism spreads to other cultures, how does its specific character relate to that of those other cultures and to human nature in general, and how does this relate to the internal organisation of that religion?³⁸ These questions may be helpful in understanding whether or not and to what extent; Winners’ Chapel may be reconfiguring its original Nigerian cultural

³⁵ Linda Van De Kamp and Rijk Van Dijk, ‘Pentecostals Moving South-South: Brazilian and Ghanaian Transnationalism in Southern Africa’, in Adogame and Spickard (eds.) *Religion Crossing Boundaries*, 123.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ André Droogers, ‘Globalisation and Pentecostal Success’ in Corten and Marshall-Fratani (eds.) *Between Babel and Pentecost*, 42.

³⁸ Ibid.

tenets in its mission in Cameroon or rather promoting the same. This would be useful in understanding the character of intra-African Pentecostalism.

Using qualitative and historical research methods, Ezekiel Oladapo has investigated leadership roles in the transnationalisation of Nigerian Pentecostal churches. His comparative study is based on the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church in the Netherlands and Ghana. He argues that strategic leadership competence within the movement can be credited with the Church's growth and expansion, a phenomenon through which adherents are provided with liberating spiritual alternatives through emphasis on warfare prayers, framed within the context of traditional African cosmologies of power, spirits and evil. This construct remains attractive because it addresses the needs of members who are trapped in disintegrating socio-economic challenges both in Africa and the Diaspora.³⁹ Oladapo's thesis focuses on the role of leadership in the Pentecostalist mission discourse rather than on the group itself or its transnational and power dynamics. Vedaste Nzayabino has investigated the impact of the Yahweh Shammah Assembly Church on the integration of Congolese migrants in Johannesburg. He argues that affiliation by immigrants to this church is a salient form of belonging that counters migrants' sense of transience and shapes their motivation to integrate into a xenophobic South African society. The Church thus meets the needs of Congolese migrants before serving the religious and cultural 'outsider.'⁴⁰ His thesis contributes to the understanding of the place of religion within complex contemporary debates on identity and belonging in Diasporic communities. While Nzayabino's work

³⁹ Ezekiel Oladapo, 'Leadership Roles in the Transnationalisation of Nigerian Pentecostal Churches: The Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church in the Netherlands and Ghana' (PhD diss., University of Leiden, 2013).

⁴⁰ Nzayabino Vedaste, 'Rethinking the Impact of the Church on the Dynamics of Integration of Congolese Migrants in Johannesburg: A Case study of Yahweh Shammah Assembly' (PhD diss., University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 2011).

echoes Hunt's examination of the relationship among Pentecostalism, deprivation and the fulfilment of the needs of specific social groups in the USA and Britain,⁴¹ both claims overlook the roles of such churches in addressing the spiritual drought that could be present in otherwise strange contexts.

Daniel Walker's study of the Church of Pentecost provides the long view of this Pentecostal movement from its inception in Ghana to its spread to other African countries and the southern hemisphere, and then to the United Kingdom. He uses what he calls the 'economission' model to argue that the expansion of the movement has been a result of initiatives from grassroots adherents and not necessarily influential authoritative structures.⁴² Walker's thesis brings to light the importance of local actors in the missionary engagements of transnational religious movements but significantly fails to suggest whether or not nationals from elsewhere other than Ghana, serve the church outside Ghana and what possible encounters may emerge between the Ghanaian pastors and the seeming 'outsiders'.

Afe Adogame has suggested that 'Contemporary migrant groups are largely characterised by networks and life patterns that entangle both their 'old home' and 'new host' societies, as well as other new host contexts.'⁴³ Such a triangular trajectory in contemporary migration entails an investigation of how migrant groups move beyond their settlement boundaries in specific locations and continuously proliferate in new cultural geospaces within the same nation-state. As Marshall-Fratani argues, 'the new Charismatic type of Pentecostalism creates a moral and

⁴¹ Steven Hunt, 'Deprivation and Western Pentecostalism Revisited: The Case of 'Classical' Pentecostalism', *PentecoStudies* 1, no. 1 (2002): 1-32.

⁴² Daniel O. Walker, 'The Pentecost Fire is b Burning: Models of Mission Activities in the Church of Pentecost', (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2007), 79-172.

⁴³ Afe Adogame, 'Transnational Migration and Pentecostalism in Europe', *PentecoStudies: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Research on the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* 9, no. 1 (2010): 56-73.

physical geography whose domain is one of transnational cultural inter-penetration and flow.⁴⁴ This research aims to investigate this cultural inter-penetration and flow and the creation of new religious geographies by Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. It also intends to uncover any evidence of power that may be inherent in the missionary engagements of the church from Nigeria and within Cameroon. A cursory look at the state of current research on Pentecostalism in Cameroon will be helpful in setting the research scene.

3.2. Research on Pentecostalism in Cameroon

Pentecostal studies on Cameroon are relatively scanty when compared to those of other countries such as Nigeria and Ghana, which belong to the same sub-region, probably because the movement has often been regarded in Cameroon with suspicion.⁴⁵ Birgit Meyer has expressed frustration in trying to determine why APCCs first burgeoned in British ex-colonies, such as in Nigeria and Ghana, as against Francophone ex-colonies such as Cameroon and Benin. She suggests, however, that this could partly be due to a plural religious landscape, historical factors, such as differences among religious cultures in former ex-colonies both Anglophone and Francophone, and the extent to which they endorse or reject religious pluralism.⁴⁶ Allan Anderson was probably adopting the same perspective when he commented that the Government of Cameroon (a former French trust territory) views new Pentecostal churches from Nigeria as intruders and remains

⁴⁴ Marshall-Fratani, 'Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism', 281.

⁴⁵ See chapter one of this study for comments on the closing down of PCCs in Cameroon by the Government for alleged malpractices.

⁴⁶ Meyer, 'Christianity in Africa', 447-74.

suspicious about them since many Nigerians see neighbouring countries as possible places to start churches and generate income as well.⁴⁷

Paul Gifford pioneered Pentecostal studies on Cameroon when he investigated *African Christianity: Its Public Role* in 1998.⁴⁸ Gifford devoted chapter six of his book to Cameroon and expounded Christian precedents from the days of mission historic churches to born-again churches or APCCs. He also examined the churches' role in society. Gifford's book remains an important resource for investigating developments in church history in the wider African context. Robert Akoko has linked the proliferation of Pentecostal churches in Cameroon during the 1990s to the economic crisis that struck the nation.⁴⁹ Akoko argues that Pentecostal groups such as the Full Gospel Mission provided job opportunities to desperate citizens during the crisis and recruited more members into their fold in the process. While Akoko's thesis recalls the phenomenon of 'rice Christians', it is clearly focused on classical Pentecostal churches in Cameroon that emerged around the 1940s, rather than the more recent APCCs such as Winners' Chapel and RCCG that emerged in Cameroon in the late 1990s. His research perspective is also limited to an examination of Pentecostal movements in the Anglophone southwest region of Cameroon and not the intra-African paradigm from Nigeria to Cameroon, which will be the perspective of my study.

Ludovic Lado has investigated the origins, history and ethnography of the Ephphatha charismatic movement that emerged within the Roman Catholic Church in Cameroon. It was founded by Meinrad Hebga, a Roman Catholic priest, in 1976,

⁴⁷ BBC NEWS, 'Nigerian Pastors Spread into Cameroon', available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/religion-20150903-nigerian-pentecostals>. (Accessed 03/09/15).

⁴⁸ Gifford, *African Christianity*.

⁴⁹ Akoko, 'Ask and You shall be Given'.

and has now spread to other African countries and the Diaspora.⁵⁰ Lado saw a gap in research in African Pentecostalism, which has often focused on African Independent churches, and independent Pentecostalism to the neglect of new religious movements that emerge within mission historic churches. It is this lacuna that he sought to fill. At the centre of his thesis is an investigation as to whether the Roman Catholic Church in Africa and elsewhere promotes the concept of inculturation.⁵¹

Three related studies have been carried out on the influence of Pentecostal practices within the PCC. Divine Aguh investigated the “Rituals of Healing and Deliverance: The PCC and the Pentecostal Challenge (1976-210)”.⁵² He examines the extent to which charismatic rituals of healing and deliverance have affected the traditions of the PCC with respect to its traditional ritual of healing and how the PCC authorities have responded to any challenge resulting therefrom. Aguh shows that there are two groups of divided opinions within the PCC. One group approves of charismatic healing and deliverance practices and the other prefers to maintain the traditional Reformed practices of the church. He suggest that, unlike in the past, the PCC authorities are now condoning the ongoing charismatisation in the church, possibly as a strategy to prevent its Christians from switching their membership to Pentecostal churches, given the popularity of Pentecostalism in Cameroon. In a related study, Gala Otto examines the prevalence of healing services and anointing in the PCC under the influence of the expansion of Pentecostalism. Gala recommends that special healing anointing services should be practised in the PCC because these

⁵⁰ Lado Ludovic, *Catholic Pentecostalism and the Paradoxes of Africanisation: Processes of Localisation in a Catholic Movement in Cameroon* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009).

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Divine M. Aguh, ‘Rituals of Healing and Deliverance: The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and the Pentecostal Challenge 1976-2010’ (Master’s diss., School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh, 2010).

constitute a divinely sanctioned plan for humanity.⁵³ Another study on Pentecostalism in Cameroon related to the PCC is that of Emmanuel Masok. Masok argues that the influence of a global Pentecostal ethos in the PCC should not be seen as a threat but as a challenge for the church to re-evaluate its doctrinal and theological praxis, especially in the area of worship, in order to harmonise with contemporary trends in world Christianity.⁵⁴ All three studies are on Pentecostal influences within the PCC and not on the emergence and spread of a transnational Pentecostal Charismatic Church.

Tomas Drønen's *Pentecostalism, Globalisation, and Islam in Northern Cameroon*,⁵⁵ is seminal as far as Pentecostal studies in Cameroon are concerned. He argues that Pentecostalism seems to be the most important popular movement serving as a vehicle of cultural globalisation.⁵⁶ Taking his examples from mainly Francophone-oriented APCCs in the Muslim-dominated city of Ngaoundéré, Drønen examines the relationship between local initiatives and global flows in the Pentecostal missionary imagination, and concludes that the Ngaoundéré context represents closure rather than flows for the Pentecostal churches. His argument regarding several contextual issues, which separate the practices of the Anglophone Nigeria-inspired churches in south-western Cameroon from the phenomenon evolving in the North (where French political culture and the presence of Islam have established political and religious cultures difficult for the Pentecostals to penetrate), is highly illuminating. But one important area of concern Drønen raises in his research and which is crucial to this study is about what happens when a predominantly Anglophone-inspired movement spreads in a Francophone area. His

⁵³ Gala Otto, *Healing Services and Anointing- A Divine Sanction* (Yaoundé: Messie Publishers, 2009).

⁵⁴ Emmanuel Masok, 'How should the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon Respond to the Global Pentecostalism?' (Master's diss., Presbyterian Theological Seminary Kumba, 2010).

⁵⁵ Drønen, *Pentecostalism, Globalisation and Islam in Northern Cameroon*.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

concern, however, is with whether or not African Pentecostal movements need to depend on North American ideas in order to succeed in their mission endeavours.⁵⁷ Although the question that Drónen raises is not central to this thesis, his argument about whether or not dominant Pentecostal groups from elsewhere can influence local APCCs is important. APCCs may not be dependent on North American ideas for their success in Africa but it has to be asked to what extent it is possible to find aspects of leadership and domination exercised by one APCC over against its daughter congregations elsewhere within the continent of Africa. That is to say, in a situation in which a church branch outside the original context where it was founded, how far does it rely on the mother church for leadership, control and even spiritual empowerment? This question will be taken up in chapter 5 of the study where the concept of intra-African power is explicated.

3.2.1. Nomenclature of Pentecostalism in Cameroon

Pentecostals in Cameroon are commonly referred to as ‘born again’ (or *né de nouveau*). Jonas Dah has classified Pentecostalism in Cameroon into four groups, namely: the Classical Pentecostals, the Cameroonian Indigenous Pentecostals, the Charismatics, and the Neo-Charismatics.⁵⁸ Classical Pentecostal churches, like others elsewhere, are largely linked to western missionary endeavours in Cameroon. Examples include the Apostolic and the Full Gospel churches, which pioneered Pentecostal Christianity in Cameroon. Indigenous Pentecostal churches are those founded through local initiatives, such as the prophetic-type movements that stress the working of the gifts of the Spirit. The analogues of these churches elsewhere in Africa would be the Aladura or ‘praying churches’ of Nigeria. Examples of

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Jonas Dah, ‘The Vision and Challenges of an Autonomous Church’ in Jonas N. Dah (ed.) *Presbyterian Church in Cameroon: Fifty Years of Selfhood* (Buea: Presprint Limbe, 2007), 34-73.

indigenous Pentecostal Movements in Cameroon are the *Assemblée Compassion Globale* of Prophet Samuel Tatheu, founded in Douala in the 1990s, and the Holy Spirit Movement of Prophetess Sophie Njie, founded in Numben-Batibo in 1967.⁵⁹ The term ‘Charismatic’ refers to Pentecostal-like movements in the Catholic and mainline Protestant churches, such as the Maranatha Family of Jesus Healing Movement in Bojongo parish in the Anglophone Roman Catholic Diocese of Buea⁶⁰ and the Pilot Revival Prayer Group of Cameroon in the PCC Bastos congregation. The Pilot Revival group emerged in the 1990s, flowered in the 2000s and was later extinguished by tensions and disagreements between its founders and the hierarchy of the PCC.⁶¹ The Neo-Charismatics are the latest group of Pentecostal churches in Cameroon, a factor which has caused them to be dubbed ‘Modern Pentecostals’.⁶² Their characteristic employment of the media and modern technology in their mission activities, to a greater extent than most of the other Pentecostal groups, clearly distinguishes them and justifies the nomenclature ‘Modern.’⁶³ Examples of Neo-Charismatic churches in Cameroon include the Faith Bible Church, Winners’ Chapel, Redeemed Christian Church of God, *Centre Apostolique Source de la Vie*, *Chapelle de Renouelle*,⁶⁴ and more recent ones such as the Ramah Christian Centre, founded in 2010 in Bamenda by Solomon Che Wara.

Nomenclature remains a significant theme in Pentecostal scholarship because of the different strands that have emerged in recent scholarship. It is therefore difficult to assign an exact name to the movement as a whole at any one time. Scholars like Allan Anderson have treated Africa Instituted Churches (AICs)

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Piet Konings, ‘Religious Revival in the Roman Catholic Church and the Autochthony–Allochthony Conflict in Cameroon’, *Africa* 73, no. 1 (2003): 31-56.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Aguh, ‘Rituals of Healing and Deliverance’.

⁶³ Dah, ‘The Vision and Challenges of an Autonomous Church’, 47.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

alongside Pentecostal and Charismatic churches as representations of the older and newer varieties respectively, which nevertheless constitute different instantiations of Pentecostalism in Africa. In some cases, these churches are simply referred to as ‘Pentecostal’ and ‘Charismatic’.⁶⁵ One can use the term ‘Pentecostalism’ to encompass classical Pentecostals, neo-Pentecostals, Charismatics, neo-Charismatics, and denominational Pentecostals (including Christian and para-church organisations).⁶⁶ However, some scholars have used the terms ‘Pentecostal’ and ‘Charismatic’ interchangeably, while others choose to refer simply to ‘Pentecostal/Charismatic movements’.⁶⁷ These different usages illustrate the fact that there is not one Pentecostalism, nor homogenous mission praxis. Noret’s study of Pentecostalism in Benin, Nigeria and Togo highlights the diversity of Pentecostal movements implied by this situation and the different types of transnational bonds within Africa.⁶⁸ Anderson has therefore distinguished between churches of western classical Pentecostal origin, and the more recent independent Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and ministries that have arisen since the 1970s, as the two forms of African Pentecostalism.⁶⁹ However, Pentecostal and Charismatic movements are identified by their emphasis on the Holy Spirit as a prerequisite to salvation, evangelism and the empowering presence of God.⁷⁰ The term

⁶⁵ Allan Anderson, ‘World Pentecostalism at a Crossroads’ in Allan Anderson and W.J. Hollenweger (eds.) *Pentecostals After a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 221.

⁶⁶ Stanley Burgess and Edward Van der Mass (eds.) *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostalism and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

⁶⁷ Afe Adogame, ‘Pentecostalism and Charismatic Movements in a Global Perspective’ in Bryan S. Turner (ed.) *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 500.

⁶⁸ Joel Noret, ‘On the Inscrutability of the Ways of God’, 107.

⁶⁹ Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 104.

⁷⁰ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, ‘The Promise is for You and Your Children: Pentecostal Spirituality, Mission and Discipleship in Africa’ in Wonsuk Ma and Kenneth Ross (eds.) *Mission Spirituality and Authentic Discipleship* (Oxford: Regnum, 2013), 10.

Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches is being employed in this study, in order to encompass the various strands of Pentecostalism that have emerged over time.

3.3. Research on Winners' Chapel

Research on Winners' Chapel is relatively limited in the current literature on Pentecostalism and the sociology of religion. However, there are a few articles or chapters in books and unpublished dissertations. Samuel Krinsky contributed a chapter to the book, *Religion Crossing Boundaries* edited by Afe Adogame and James Spickard. He examined the simultaneous development and intensity of national and transnational sentiments within Winners' Chapel and showed how the social or conceptual developments within Nigerian and wider African culture might be promoting the rise of these new ascendant perspectives.⁷¹ According to Krinsky, 'Christianity as practised among peoples of African descent, whether on the continent or in the New Diaspora, would tend towards the formation of communities that span national, cultural, geographic, or other boundaries'.⁷²

Afe Adogame's monograph on *The African Christian Diaspora: New Currents and Emerging Trends in World Christianity*⁷³ highlights some important aspects of Winners' Chapel in its missionary praxis. In examining the phenomenology of African Christian communities in Diaspora, Adogame uses Winners' Chapel to exemplify what he calls, 'spiritual terrorism within and beyond borders: Pentecostalism and ritual emplacement'.⁷⁴ He argues that elaborate rituals are carried out in Winners' Chapel in order to combat spiritual terrorist attacks that

⁷¹ Samuel Krinsky, 'The Pan-African Church: Nation, Self, And Spirit in Winners' Chapel, Nigeria' in Adogame and Spickard (eds.) *Religion crossing boundaries*, 232-251.

⁷² Ibid, 235.

⁷³ Afe Adogame, *The African Christian Diaspora: New Currents and Emerging Trends in World Christianity*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 93.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

hinder people's progress in all aspects of life, both in Africa and elsewhere.⁷⁵ Even though Adogame's book is on religious transnationalism, he seems not to have been interested in the ways in which the spiritual power of Oyedepo is given meaning in Winners' Chapel in its transnational social and religious domains and the networks that facilitate it.

Asonzeh Ukah has investigated the mobilisation and organisation of money in West African Pentecostalism. In his article, "Piety and Profit: Accounting for money in West African Pentecostalism",⁷⁶ Ukah focuses on two transnational churches, Winners' Chapel of Nigerian origin, with congregations in Cameroon and elsewhere, and the Christian Missionary Fellowship International of Cameroonian origin, with its congregations in Nigeria. He argues that the issue of resource mobilisation within Pentecostalism in Africa is a blind spot for current scholarship.⁷⁷ Ukah suggests that the two sampled churches demand huge financial sacrifices from their members but exhibit a high degree of suspicion in disclosing their inner workings, particularly in the areas of financial management and public accountability. According to Ukah, 'the paradox is obvious: the flow of money into the new churches has gone hand in hand with closure of records and accounting processes, the more money for these churches, the more their social power and the more closure about record-keepings and transparency.'⁷⁸ While Ukah's findings seem to have been limited to how his sample churches, especially Winners' Chapel, mobilise money from their members with a corresponding lack of accountability, he manifestly neglects any socio-economic benefit or spiritual nurture that such churches might offer their adherents and local communities. Moreover, although he refers to the

⁷⁵ Ibid, 93.

⁷⁶ Asonzeh Ukah, 'Piety and profit: accounting for money in West African Pentecostalism (Part 2)' *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal* 48, no. 3 & 4 (2007): 633-648.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 633.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 644.

establishment of these churches across international boundaries, he is not interested in their transnational and power dynamics. However, Ukah's study will be useful for Chapter Six of this study where the provision of social capital and empowerment of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon are examined within the context of remittances.

Two Masters dissertations on Winners' Chapel in Nigeria are also available in the literature: in the first of these Mathias Onyedi argues that the prosperity doctrines of Winners' Chapel, that demand the payment of tithes and cheerful monetary offerings to the church by its adherents, suggests that it is a prosperity church,⁷⁹ while in the second Joseph Makanjuola Dayo examines the relationship between the gospel preached in Winners' Chapel and St Paul's teaching on wisdom, and its relevance to anointing for wisdom in Winners' Chapel. He concludes that the content of the gospel preached by Winners' Chapel might reveal that the church believes in the Wisdom of God as taught by St Paul. However, he suggests that the lifestyles found among members of the church are far from the wisdom taught by Paul.⁸⁰

Selome Kuponu has investigated the Winners' Chapel in Nigeria within the context of prosperity, social change and the hierarchical and power structure of the movement.⁸¹ Kuponu documents the history, emergence, development, organisational structure and social relevance of the LFCW in Nigeria and suggests that the church is a product of distinctive but interacting worldviews: traditional African cosmology and the Judaeo-Christian tradition—two worlds that are in constant creative tension. Kuponu concludes that while there are frequent rejections

⁷⁹ Mathias Onyedi, 'The Prosperity Theology of a New Pentecostal Church: A Case Study of Winners' Chapel', (Master's diss., University of Ibadan, 1998).

⁸⁰ Joseph Makanjuola, 'St Paul's Teaching on Wisdom and its Relevance to Anointing for Wisdom in the Living Faith Church' (Master's diss., University of Ibadan, 2002).

⁸¹ Kuponu, 'The Living Faith Church (Winners' Chapel), Nigeria.

of traditional worldviews, elements of these worldviews unambiguously inform the practices and rituals of Winners' Chapel.⁸² His thesis also provides some details of the distribution and use of power in Winners' Chapel. Kuponu's thesis is very useful for exemplifying the dynamics of power in Winner's Chapel, as will be shown in chapter 3, where the theoretical framework of this thesis is developed, and in chapter 5, where the concept of intra-African power is investigated.

The various studies that have been examined as part of the relevant literature for this study predominantly show the determination of APCCs such as Winners' Chapel to transcend local boundaries and spread as far as they can. This is the evidence that the transnational nature of APCCs has continuously gained ascendancy in the academic literature in religious transnationalism. However, chapter one of this study noted that research on Pentecostal transnationalism often assumes that religious movements move from one location to the other, while neglecting the intra-national movements and power dynamics that may result from their encounters with the new host territory. For these reasons, the conceptualisation of transnationalism has been relatively slanted and therefore needs further consideration. One way would be to conceptualise transnationalism within contexts of power including other ways in which practices of transnational groups transcend their places of origin to new host territories. Michael Peter *et al* have suggested that studies in transnationalism should be underpinned by a curiosity to understand how the process of transnationalism 'affects power relations, cultural constructions, economic interactions, and, more generally, social organisations at the level of the locality'.⁸³

⁸² Ibid, 180.

⁸³ Michael Peter Smith and Luis Guarnizo (eds.) *Transnationalism From Below: Comparative Urban and Community Research Volume 6* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers), 1998, 6.

3.4. Transnationalism, Power/Empowerment and Hierarchy: Towards a Theoretical Formulation

3.4.1. Transnationalism

The concept of transnationalism has been variously defined both in academic and other spheres of life. For example, in migration studies, some scholars have used the interconnected notions of transnationalism, globalisation and diaspora to make sense of migrant and refugee practices and ‘the long-term, long-distance, connections maintained between family members, communities and states across international borders’.⁸⁴ This rather ambiguous definition of transnationalism which combines other notions within migration studies is mostly limited to individual connections from one place to the other and does not handle the operations of large - scale institutions like transnational churches. Nicholas Van Hear defines transnationalism as ‘the formation of social, political and economic relationships among migrants that span several societies’.⁸⁵ According to this understanding, transnationalism can give rise to people of multiple allegiances to place.⁸⁶ Van Hear’s definition is helpful because it connects transnational movements to political, social and economic contexts which consequently reflect a system of values that engulf important facets of life. However, this definition also fails to suggest how the receiving countries of transnational groups may be involved in the practices and operations of transnational groups within their socio-political and economic operations. Ruth Marshall-Fratani helpfully defines transnationalism as ‘any relation which deliberately or by its nature,

⁸⁴ Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, ‘From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration’, *Anthropological Quarterly* 61, no.1 (1995): 48-63.

⁸⁵ Nicholas Van Hear, *New Diasporas: The Mass Exodus, Dispersal and Regrouping of Migrant Communities* (Seattle: University of Washington Press 1999), 4.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

constructs itself within a global space beyond the context of the nation-state, and which escapes, at least partially, the control or mediating action of states.⁸⁷ While this definition captures the movement of groups from one nation to another and acknowledges a certain degree of contestations between transnational groups and receiving nations, it fails to recognise any power structures that may be inherent in the operations of transnational groups across borders. It rather suggests that transnational groups might escape the control or mediating action of states. But transnational APCCs often operate with existing structures in their new host contexts and it would be important to investigate any networks, loyalty, tension and resistance that may result from their multidimensional engagements. The question to ask with respect to this study would be: What are the current motivational and strategic dynamics of transnational religious movements such as Winners' Chapel in Cameroon, and what are the various networks, exchanges and contestations that characterise their multidimensional involvements? Afe Adogame has intimated that new circumstances, contextual factors in new host cultural contexts, often provoke migrants to reconfigure their religion in a way that resonates with the conditions of their new homes.⁸⁸ Do transnational APCCs reconfigure their religious worldviews in order to provide a more contextual form of Christianity in their new mission fields? Or do they maintain a certain form of homogeneity by exporting practices of the church from the place of founding to new mission fields. If indeed transnational religious movements have to reconfigure their missionary perspectives in order to capture the reality of their receiving countries, what could be the possible outcome of the relationship between representative transnational groups and members of the

⁸⁷ Ruth Marshall-Fratani, 'Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28, no. 3 (1998): 278-315.

⁸⁸ Afe Adogame, 'Transnational Migration and Pentecostalism in Europe', *PentecoStudies: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Research on the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* 9, no. 1 (2010): 56.

group in the receiving countries? If the representative transnational body wishes to replicate the values of the movement in the host context, as defined in its place of origin, and the receiving country colleagues wish to embrace the new church by making it relevant to their contemporary realities, what would be the resultant effects of any changes? Roger Waldinger and David Fitzgerald have suggested that ‘migration networks generate a multiplicity of ‘imagined communities’ organized along different, often conflicting principles’.⁸⁹ For these reasons, I would define transnationalism as the network of exchanges linking individuals and groups across countries and the fluidity and diversity of these exchanges in new geocultural spaces within the host nation-state. Such exchanges could be tripartite, among members of the transnational group, and/or with existing similar groups, and/or with state authorities of the host nation-state, involving intricate networks of loyalty, contestation and resistance.

This definition seems relevant because the current salience of religious transnationalism within anthropology and the social sciences demands that, in carrying out research, scholars take into account both the movement and establishment of religious groups in new contexts, and also investigate the various exchanges that take place between transnational religious actors such as missionaries, their host context colleagues and the transnational religious field. This could provide evidence for the existence of the phenomenon being studied and the reasonableness of the group in terms of representation. Portes *et al* caution that it is useless attempting to explain a phenomenon whose existence has not been proved—a common fallacy within the social sciences where explanations have often been

⁸⁹ Roger Waldinger and David Fitzgerald, ‘Transnationalism in Question 1’, *American Journal of Sociology* 109, no. 5 (2004): 177.

offered for processes whose reality remains controversial.⁹⁰ In her article, “Transnational social fields and imperialism”, Nina Glick Schiller regrets that transnational studies that focus on transnational communities or diasporas obscure important relations of power.⁹¹ It is therefore important for scholars of international migration or mission and migration to continue to investigate the relationship between Pentecostal transnationalism and power.

3.4.2. Power and Empowerment in Pentecostalism

Power can be defined as ‘the capacity of some persons and organisations to produce intended, foreseen, and unforeseen effects on others’.⁹² The concept of power in transnational APCCs could be developed from the interactions between the various groups that constitute a transnational church. This may involve those originally identifying with the church from its place of origin and other participants in the transnational social or religious field, in order to identify who wields power within the relationship and how such power is transmitted and appropriated. It will also be important to establish whether such power is power with the host context (stewardship and dominion), or power over members of the group in the host context (domination). These perspectives would possibly resonate with what Nelson Polsby called the politics of a community. Polsby argued that ‘power may be studied by examining ‘who participates, who gains and losses, and who prevails in decision-making.’⁹³ Some scholars of Pentecostalism argue that the idea of power in Pentecostalism needs to be interpreted by examining two groups of people within the

⁹⁰ Alejandro Portes, Luis E. Guarnizo and Patricia Landolt, ‘The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent Research Field’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, no. 2 (1999): 218.

⁹¹ Nina Glick Schiller, ‘Transnational social fields and imperialism bringing a theory of power to transnational studies’, *Anthropological Theory* 5, no. 4 (2005): 439-461.

⁹² Cornell Empowerment Group, ‘Empowerment and Family Support’, *Networking Bulletin*, 1 no. 1 (October 1989), 2.

⁹³ Nelson W. Polsby, *Community Power and Political Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 55.

movement - those who lead the movement and those who have a marginal role, in which case the former derive some benefits through their influence and the use of power.⁹⁴ This would suggest that power is concentrated in the hands of a few people who occupy privileged positions of authority and are able to wield their influence and power. For example, leaders in Pentecostal churches are those who influence people around them based on their personalities, gifts and or abilities. Leaders have the capability to ‘mobilise human and material resources of the society toward specific social ends’.⁹⁵ Here, the duty of leadership is to ‘mobilise’ others to realise the aspirations or aims of the group. In other words, leadership is that which provides the followers with the challenge or the need to act. Such actions are geared toward the desired mutual benefits of the group.⁹⁶ In the context of intra-African Pentecostalism, one can link the source of power to the place where the church was originally founded and how this power percolates from that vantage point as the movement seeks to negotiate religious space across the continent. So the questions to be answered in this study concerning power are: who wields power in the missionary engagements of the Winners’ Chapel in Cameroon? And what resources are employed for the execution of power and authority? When Peter Blau spoke of authority that is legitimated by the sanctity of tradition, he was referring to what Max Weber called ‘traditional authority’ in which a ‘social order is viewed as sacred eternal, and inviolable... and where the dominant person ... is thought to have been preordained to rule over the rest’.⁹⁷ How does Oyedepo make sure that his leadership and spiritual power is felt in Cameroon as he leads his ‘God-ordained’ Winners’

⁹⁴ Michael P. Tettey, ‘Pentecostalism and Empowerment: A Study of the Church of Pentecost and International Central Gospel Church, Ghana (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2015), 65.

⁹⁵ David M. Rosen, ‘Leadership Systems in World Cultures’, in Barbara Kellerman (ed.) *Leadership: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc. 1983), 39.

⁹⁶ Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 21.

⁹⁷ Peter Blau, ‘Critical Remarks on Weber's Theory of Authority’, *The American Political Science Review* 57, no. 2 (1963): 308.

Chapel ministry from Nigeria? This question is important because as Blau further suggests, the subjects in a 'sacred social order' 'are bound to the ruler by personal dependence and a tradition of loyalty, and their obedience to him is further reinforced by such cultural beliefs as the divine right to Kings'.⁹⁸ This means that it is important for the leader to transmit his spiritual authority and power to his adherents in order to keep the connection between them. However, the exercise of power can easily lead to powerlessness.

Powerlessness results when individuals or particular groups of people consider their actions to have no consequences in affecting the outcomes of life occurrences.⁹⁹ Two forms of powerlessness have been identified in the literature. 'Real powerlessness' and 'Surplus powerlessness'.¹⁰⁰ Real powerlessness involves 'inequalities and oppressive control exercised by systems and other people'¹⁰¹ while 'surplus powerlessness' is defined as 'an internalised belief that change cannot occur, a belief which result in apathy and unwillingness of a person (or a people) to struggle for more control and influence'.¹⁰² In 'surplus powerlessness', 'people have a deep emotional commitment to losing, to being isolated, and to remaining powerless. Tactics and strategies are often shaped by an underlying assumption that no one would ever really listen or take the powerless seriously'.¹⁰³ One of the questions that is addressed in this study concerns any inequalities and oppressive control that may be inherent in the missionary engagements of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon (Real Powerlessness). The question to ask more generally is whether in intra-African

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ John Lord and Peggy Hutchison, 'The Process of Empowerment: Implications for Theory and Practice', *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health* 12, no. 1 (2009): 8-10.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 2.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Jerry Wallulis and Michael Lerner, 'Surplus Powerlessness: The Psychodynamics of Everyday Life and the Psychology of Individual and Social Transformation', *Humanity & Society* 17, no. 1 (1993): 1.

Pentecostalism one can find a categorisation of the powerful and the powerless. But even more decisive is whether or not the powerless simply acquiesce to the power of the powerful or start resisting the power at some point. If there is evidence that in a transnational missionary enterprise some people feel oppressed, then the question of resistance would resonate with John Gaventa's query when he asked 'why, in an oppressed community where one might intuitively expect upheaval, does one instead find, or appear to find, quiescence?'¹⁰⁴ Gaventa's question was framed within the context of democratic and Marxist theories but is important in this study because it raises questions about the loyalty and contestations that may emerge between so-called powerful transnational actors and the powerless in a transnational religious community.

The two concepts of power and powerlessness are important in interpreting religious phenomena of groups such as Pentecostal Charismatic Churches whose conception of power is key to their belief systems and practices, and often form their ideological basis. For example, ACCs associate the Holy Spirit with physical, moral, and spiritual power and view the Spirit as the all-embracing, pervading power of God.¹⁰⁵ But apart from the Holy Spirit who is believed to be transmitted by powerful religious leaders to combat the evil spiritual forces that threaten people's lives, APCC leaders also exercise authoritative control possibly to maintain and promote the transmission of their power. The appropriation of power is particularly important in intra-African Pentecostalism where the constitution of the work force often involves participants that could too easily be categorised as 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. For example, the RCCG pioneered APCC transnationalisation by extending to Ghana

¹⁰⁴ John Gaventa, *Power and powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1980): 1.

¹⁰⁵ Allan Anderson, 'Pentecostal pneumatology and African power concepts continuity or change?' *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 19, no. 1 (1991): 73.

in 1981 before moving to other West African countries. Some scholars argue that its growth has been facilitated by the appointment and sending of missionaries from Nigeria to these other countries to serve as coordinators and representatives of the leadership in Nigeria.¹⁰⁶ This means that a relationship between the Nigerian headquarters and other branches of the church elsewhere is a major feature of the church. These missionaries will therefore serve as the link between the leadership in Nigeria and the churches in foreign countries. Another relationship may be between the Nigerian missionaries and indigenes of the receiving country serving in the church as pastors or other staff. Within such relationships, contestations of power and loyalty may emerge, as the missionaries try to implement the policies of the church, as directed from Nigeria. If that is true, then another question to ask and try to answer is what are some of the ways in which transnational APCCs maintain the power and influence of the mother church in the new mission fields and in what ways do their colleagues in such mission fields react to such power and influence? This question will be important in the analysis in chapter 5 of the roles of Nigerian Winners' Chapel missionaries in Cameroon and also investigate whether or not Cameroonians acquiesce to the power of the Nigerian leadership or there are any forms of resistance.

Joseph Nye has propounded the concept of 'soft power' in diplomacy and international relations, to explain how dominant groups can situate themselves on certain vantage points in order to persuade others to succumb to their leadership. According to Nye, a country's 'soft power' rests on its resources of culture, values,

¹⁰⁶ Llufunke A. Adeboye, 'Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Nigeria' In Andre Mary Fourchard, and Rene Otayak (eds.) *Entreprises religieuses transnationales en Afrique de l'ouest* (Paris: Editions Karthala: IFRA, 2005), 453.

and policies.¹⁰⁷ The concept of soft power has been used by some scholars to substantiate the influence of Nigeria in Africa. They argue that in addition to Nigeria's advanced military equipment and relatively flourishing economy, the Nollywood film industry and Nigerian-founded mega-churches have added impetus to Nigeria's superior power and influence in Africa.¹⁰⁸ Some elite Nigerian pastors and televangelists have been projected into the international scene through their miracles and healing powers and thus draw affection toward Nigeria¹⁰⁹ Prominent Nigerian preachers who fit that description include Prophet T.B Joshua of the Synagogue Church of All Nations, Pastor Chris Oyakilome of Believers Love World, Bishop David Oyedepo of Winners' Chapel, and Pastor Enoch Adeboye of the RCCG.¹¹⁰

The concept of 'soft power' implies that powerful institutions can use persuasion through certain attractive values to make others succumb to their leadership. In this study, I will try to discover how far the concept of 'soft power' can be used to understand how Winners' Chapel maintains its power and control in Cameroon and whether or not the Cameroonian daughter church completely succumbs to the power of the Nigerian mother church or there are instances of resistance. If we establish that there is a certain level of power being exercised by the Nigerian mother church on the Cameroonian daughter, then one needs to ask: what is the goal that shapes the exercise of power? How do temporal power and charismatic power relate to each other? And how does the daughter church react to such power dynamics. This is important because Max Weber placed power within a trajectory

¹⁰⁷ Joseph Nye, 'Public Diplomacy and Soft Power', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 1, no.1 (2008): 94-109.

¹⁰⁸ D. Flesmes and T Wojczewski, *Contested Leadership in International Relations: Power Politics in South America, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa* (Hamburg: German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Working paper, 2010), No 121.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

where power brokers may continue to wield their power and influence despite resistance. According to Weber, power is ‘the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance’.¹¹¹ The understanding here is that power is negotiated between two or more actors and is based on the ability of the powerful to effectively use material and nonmaterial resources in a specific context, to get others to do something they would not otherwise do, and enforce outcomes suiting the preferences of the one with power.¹¹² Ezekiel Oladapo has revealed that ‘the movement of ideas, people and funds from one location to the other and the continued relationship between West African branches and the Nigerian headquarter of APCCs have been a major characteristic of transnational movements’.¹¹³ What was earlier referred to in this section as material and nonmaterial resources may be connected to these ideas, people and funds, which Oladapo mentions in his thesis. This study will examine any material and nonmaterial resources that Winners’ Chapel is exporting from Nigeria to Cameroon and how these are useful in consolidating the spiritual power and influence of the Nigerian church in Cameroon. Howbeit, what the host context may regard as power over them could be perceived by the dominant transnational church as a means by which the younger branches of the church would be empowered by expatriates, not only at the level of spirituality but more widely in the domain of social capital within transnational communities.

Michael Tettey has suggested that the study of Pentecostalism and empowerment and/or disempowerment is crucial to the discourse of ‘Religion and

¹¹¹ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: The Free Press, 1947).

¹¹² Andrej Pustovitovskij and Jan-Frederik Kremer, ‘Structural Power and International Relations’, in *Fill Your Basket, get your Preferences*, Institut Fur Entwicklungsforschung und Entwicklungspolitik, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, 2011, no. 3.

¹¹³ Ezekiel Oladapo, ‘Leadership Roles in the Transnationalisation of Nigerian Pentecostal Churches: The Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church in the Netherlands and Ghana’, (PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 2013), 23.

Development and religion as social capital'.¹¹⁴ Tetey identifies the following forms of empowerment in APCCs: Spiritual empowerment through healing and deliverance, economic and financial empowerment through prosperity and success, family empowerment, relating to God's power in the family-as a divine creation and institution, and personal and collective empowerment. He weaves together concepts of power and powerlessness as key categories that are useful for understanding empowerment in APCCs.¹¹⁵ The empowerment which Tetey refers to here mostly concern the influence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Pentecostal Charismatic Churches adherents. Allan Anderson has therefore argued that Christian pneumatology ought to affirm that the power of the Holy Spirit transcends 'spiritual' significance to dignity, authority, and power over all types of oppression because people who are faced with injustices that undermine their personal dignity lack power.¹¹⁶ Anderson's comments were in reference to 'Black Power' of the liberationists in South Africa.¹¹⁷ However, he significantly affirms that elements of power, authority and oppression are concomitant with discourses of Holy Spirit power, and shows that the holistic African worldview recognises people's concrete physical, social, political and economic needs.¹¹⁸

The holistic proclamation of the word of God, which involves the physical, social and economic needs of people, unravels the relationship between religion and development or religion and empowerment. This is important because development

¹¹⁴ Michael P. Tetey, 'Pentecostalism and Empowerment: A Study of the Church of Pentecost and International Centre Gospel Church' (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2015), 64-67.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Allan Anderson, 'African Initiated Churches of the Spirit and Pneumatology', *Word and World* 23, no. 2 (2003): 178-186.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 68.

economics often ignores the importance of religion in African societies.¹¹⁹ That is why some scholars have wondered whether religious and spiritual resources produce a type of knowledge that is, or could be, relevant to development and have suggested that researchers should rethink some earlier assumptions concerning the relation between religion and development in the broadest sense.¹²⁰ This means that the importance of religion should move beyond the spiritual to the actual socio-economic relevance that religious movements offer in the communities where they operate. This is what has been referred to, elsewhere, as human development. According to the United Nations Development Programme, human development ‘is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests’.¹²¹ One of the main issues in this study is to investigate in what ways Winners’ Chapel is providing social capital/empowerment in Cameroon. Gerrie Ter Haar and Stephen Ellis have suggested that if poor countries are to develop, people’s full range of resources including their religious and spiritual experiences ought to be foundational because these are often instrumental in areas of development such as peace and security, the quality of governance, economic growth and health and education.¹²² The provision of social capital in Pentecostal Charismatic Churches relates to the flow of material and nonmaterial resources that I earlier highlighted in my discussion about power. This is important because it raises other questions about the flow of resources for the provision of empowerment. This study examines the direction of flow of resources in intra-African Pentecostalism by asking: what exchanges in terms of resources take

¹¹⁹ Gerrie ter Haar and Stephen Ellis, ‘The Role of Religion in Development: Towards a New Relationship between the European Union and Africa: The Winner of the EJDR Prize 2006’, *The European Journal of Development Research* 18, no. 3 (2006): 351-367.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ United Nations Development Programme, available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev>: (Accessed 03/02/16).

¹²² Gerrie Ter Haar and Stephen Ellis, ‘The Role of Religion in Development’, 355.

place between the Nigerian mother and the Cameroonian daughter church and how does this play into the overall contribution of social capital and empowerment in the Cameroonian society?

The conceptualisation of power and empowerment in Pentecostalism is relevant because most Pentecostal Charismatic Churches adherents see founder-leaders as embodiments of power not simply in a spiritual, but also in a financial and even political sense.¹²³ The leader is often regarded as having more charismatic 'power' than the rest of his people and so is uniquely capable of leading them. He can pass the power that he possesses to his followers,¹²⁴ in what some have called the anointing of the man of God.¹²⁵ The obvious reason for this is that members of the church have to rely on their leader for empowerment and blessing.¹²⁶ But the faithful and effective transmission of spiritual power depends on the maintenance of structures of control or temporal power that will preserve the unique authority of the fountain-head of power. The use of missionaries in intra-African Pentecostalism may be one dimension of temporal structures of power that are meant to represent and sustain the source of spiritual power, or to check any activity that may militate against the proper transmission of spiritual power from Oyedepo to his adherents in Cameroon. The practice is not new, but surely reminiscent of biblical antecedents where the source of power of religious leaders was believed to be the Holy Spirit and which was often transferred from the spiritual leaders and inspired others. For example, Moses possessed the power of the Holy Spirit which enabled him to inspire seventy of Israel's elders to prophecy after he had laid hands on them.¹²⁷ APCCs

¹²³ Tettey, 'Pentecostalism and Empowerment', 67.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Anointing through the Screen: Neo-Pentecostalism and Televised Christianity in Ghana', *Studies in World Christianity* 11, no. 1 (2005): 9-28.

¹²⁶ Allan Anderson, 'African Initiated Churches of the Spirit and Pneumatology', 180.

¹²⁷ Ibid; Numbers 11:17-25.

greatly make use of this connection and share the belief that the Holy Spirit can be passed from their leaders to them, often through the laying on of hands or through other symbolic ritual acts.¹²⁸ In this way, the leader of a Pentecostal Charismatic Church is regarded as one having quintessential spiritual power over his/her adherents.

The power that is associated with APCC leaders resonates with what Michael Foucault popularised as ‘the pastoral power’.¹²⁹ It also reminds us of Max Weber’s description of charisma and leadership. Foucault interprets the word ‘Pastor’ as a ‘very special form of power and characterises ‘pastoral power’ as follows:

1. It is a form of power whose ultimate aim is to assure individual salvation in the next world.
2. Pastoral power is not merely a form of power that commands; it must also be prepared to sacrifice itself for the life and salvation of the flock. Therefore, it is different from royal power, which demands from its subjects to save the throne.
3. It is the form of power that looks after not just the whole community but each individual in particular, during his entire life.
4. Finally, this form of power cannot be exercised without knowing the inside of people’s minds, without exploring their souls, without making them reveal their innermost secrets. It implies a knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it.¹³⁰

Foucault saw pastoral power as a selfless and sacrificial power whose main goal was both individual and communal care and an assurance of individual salvation in the next world. According to Foucault, the vantage ground for pastoral power is an understanding of the psychological and spiritual needs of people. However, Max Weber’s theory of charismatic leadership seems to have been significantly different in that he spoke of the desire of the leader to wield power over the others, provide leadership through certain ideologies, motivating his/her followers to enjoy their power and creating a sense of common identity for all their followers. Here then are

¹²⁸ Allan Anderson, ‘African Initiated Churches of the Spirit and Pneumatology’, 180-81.

¹²⁹ Michel Foucault, *Power Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Vol. 3*, edited by James D. Faubion (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), cited in Tettey, ‘Pentecostalism and Empowerment’, 79-80.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Max Weber's six characteristics of charismatic leadership as summarised by Lewis

W. Fry:

1. Having a strong desire to influence others.
2. Being a role model for the beliefs and values leaders want their followers to adopt.
3. Articulating ideological goals with moral overtones.
4. Communicating high expectations and showing confidence in followers' abilities to meet these expectations, which then increases their self-efficacy and sense of competence; this in turn increases their performance.
5. Arousing task-relevant motivation by tapping followers' needs for esteem, power, and/or affiliation.
6. Linking the identity of followers to the collective identity of the organization.¹³¹

This study will try to examine to what extent Foucault's 'pastoral power' and Weber's charismatic leadership characteristics fit into the practices of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon.

3.5. The Structure of Power and Hierarchy in Winners' Chapel International

The hierarchical structure of any organisation is important for the distribution of duties among groups of people according to ability and status and for the proper functioning of the organisation. In the religious domain, it seems to be the configurations of charismatic power and channel of vision that characterises hierarchy and power.¹³² This may especially be true for large-scale religious movements which operate a central system of control because this will enable the leaders to keep in check branches of the church that are established beyond the originating base of the movement. David Maxwell has thus shown how leaders and structures of power in ZAOGA are stationed at the church's headquarters in Harare from where external branches of the church such as those in Mozambique, South

¹³¹ Louis W. Fry, 'Toward a theory of spiritual leadership', *The Leadership Quarterly* 14, no. 6 (2003): 700, citing Max Weber in T. Parsons (ed.) *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* translated by A.M. Henderson & T. Parsons (New York: Free Press, 1924).

¹³² Ukah, 'The Redeemed Christian Church', 107.

Africa and England are controlled.¹³³ Maxwell also shows how peripheral branches of ZAOGA are questioning and sometimes resisting the centralised ideology of the authoritarian leadership.¹³⁴

Winners' Chapel is a very hierarchical organisation where authority and power are concentrated in the person of the founder-leader, Bishop Oyedepo, who is also referred to in the constitution of the church as 'the visioner' from whom divine inspiration and direction is channelled to the entire organisation.¹³⁵

Kuponu also found that in the LFCW power and authority are controlled through established councils in a hierarchical order. But one sector, the Board of Trustees (henceforth BoTs) is, superior and has the ability to make, overrule or revoke decisions taken by others.¹³⁶ The BoTs is a body of persons given the legal authority to manage the financial affairs and property of a group and it is a prerequisite for any group to be registered with the Nigerian Corporate Affairs Commission of the Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs.¹³⁷ In Winners' Chapel, it is the sole responsibility of Bishop Oyedepo to select members into the Board and such members pay allegiance only to him.¹³⁸ Below the BoTs is the Executive Council (henceforth EC) whose members are empowered by the BoTs to organise and run the day-to-day affairs of the LFCW. Bishop Oyedepo also selects members of the EC and is the only person able to remove a person from the Council. Next in order of priority is the Council of Bishops which comprises all consecrated bishops of LFCW.¹³⁹ In 2004 there were nine consecrated bishops of the LFCW. By 2006, one bishop had resigned his appointment and founded his own church and another, a

¹³³ Maxwell, 218.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Kuponu, 'The Living Faith Church (Winners' chapel), Nigeria', 39.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 40.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid; Oyedepo, *The Mandate*, 225, 228.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 40

Ghanaian had also seceded. The two bishops are still to be replaced, waiting for the founding bishop to receive the divine inspiration that informs his decisions.¹⁴⁰ Below the Council of bishops is the National Council, which is charged with the responsibility to regulate the spiritual conduct of Winners' Chapel in a country. The LFCW is divided into a number of dioceses, each diocese has a diocesan Council which coordinates activities. There are at least eight dioceses in Nigeria with the following headquarters: Kaduna, Port-Harcourt, Warri, Ibadan, Owerri, Abuja, Ilorin and Kano.¹⁴¹ A diocese is made up of a number of Districts. A district has a District Council overseeing its activities. A district is made up of Zones and Areas. And the last segment is the local assemblies of believers and leaders directing the affairs of the small community.

3.6. The Principal Officers of Winners' Chapel and their Duties

3.6.1. The President

The highest officer in the administrative structure of the LFCW is the President/Founding Bishop-David Oyedepo. The president is also the Chairman, BoTs, as well as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the LFCW. As president, he exercises absolute control over the affairs of DOMI conglomerate as well as the LFCW. He is also referred to as the 'visioner', embodying the pre-eminent source of divine ideas and pronouncements which support the functioning of the LFCW.¹⁴² He is also understood to be the liaison between the members of the church and God. For this reason, his decisions are laws for the church and must be implemented as such. For example, he ensures that the spiritual, social, and economic welfare of his

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 44.

¹⁴¹ Rotimi Williams and Elizabeth Omoralara, 'The Church and National Development: A CASE Study of the Living Faith Church Worldwide (Winners Chapel) in Nigeria, Paper presented at the University of Ilorin, Department of Religious Studies, Kwara State, available at: <http://www.cesnur.org/2012/nigeria.htm>: (Accessed 28/02/17).

¹⁴² Kuponu, 'The Living Faith Church', 45.

adherents are realised.¹⁴³ He appoints and consecrates all LFCW bishops and delegates authority when and where necessary. He is the principal signatory to all the LFCW official documents and the chief Accountant as well as the custodian of the seal of the organisation. Selome concludes that, in theory, the Executive Council is the policy-making and monitoring body of the LFCW, in practice, however, the concentration of power and authority in the person and office of the president makes the function of the Executive Council peripheral.¹⁴⁴ As the president, Oyedepo appoints all the members of the council and has the power to remove them from office. The president is also the presiding officer at the Council of Bishops of LFCW.¹⁴⁵ Oyedepo himself reckons that ‘the office of the President shall be the highest spiritual and administrative office of the church worldwide, and the presidency shall be resident with the Founder all through his life time...’¹⁴⁶

3.6.2. The Executive Vice-President

Below the President is the Vice-President who is variously called the ‘chief missionary’, and the disseminator of the LFCW’s missionary and expansionary zeal. In addition to this, he may be delegated by the President to perform any functions deemed necessary. Since the creation of this office over three decades ago, the only occupier has been the President and founding Bishop of LFCW, David Oyedepo.¹⁴⁷ According to Oyedepo, he needs to be directed by God to select a capable candidate for the office. Since God has not yet directed him on whom to appoint, Oyedepo occupies the position himself in the meantime.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 45-47.

¹⁴⁶ Oyedepo, *The Mandate*, 227.

¹⁴⁷ Kuponu, ‘The Living Faith Church’, 47.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

3.6.3. Executive Secretary

Next to the office of the Vice President is the Executive Secretary who has direct oversight of the physical development, finance, and human resource management of the organisation.¹⁴⁹ The Executive Secretary keeps all records pertaining to the church in both national and international matters, monitors and supervises all church organisations and activities which do not fall directly within the domain of the President/Vice- President of the LFCW, and reports directly to the president. Until recently, Faith Oyedepo- the wife of the president of LFCW, was the sole occupier of this office. Kuponu suggests that her knowledge in economics and her position as wife to the church founder Oyedepo would have informed her suitability for this powerful office-with its enormous responsibilities.¹⁵⁰ In addition to being the Executive Secretary, she has been (and still is) a member of the LFCW's BoTs and the Executive Council. Kuponu is justified in claiming that Faith Oyedepo would have been the most powerful woman in the LFCW in her position as Executive Secretary because the position is next to that of the Vice President.¹⁵¹

3.6.4. Diocesan bishops

The LFCW is grouped into regional dioceses and a bishop is the spiritual head of a diocese. The president and founding Bishop has the sole responsibility and power to appoint a local bishop. Bishops function as executive chairmen as well as the chief accounting officers of their dioceses. To be a bishop in the LFCW, one must have served the church for fourteen years without warning letters, reprimands or exit. Bishops ensure that the spiritual and socio-economic welfare of members of their dioceses are achieved. They however, report all the activities of their dioceses to the

¹⁴⁹ Oyedepo, *The Mandate*, 232.

¹⁵⁰ Kuponu, 'The Living Faith Church', 47-50.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 50.

founding Bishop from time to time. In the year 2000 the LFCW had a total number of nine bishops including the founding Bishop. As mentioned earlier, two of these bishops left the church in 2004 and 2005. Pastors who now bear the title, ‘diocesan heads’ rather than ‘bishops’ have filled their positions.¹⁵²

3.6.5. Associate bishops/ Senior pastors

Associate bishops are ordained and full time employed pastors assisting the diocesan bishop in the diocese. They have the same status as district pastors. The district pastors represent the bishop in particular areas carved out of a diocese. Among this category of pastors, are directors of national projects, finance, missions and social services. They operate in the diocese and report directly to the Executive Secretary of LFCW. The bishops’ wives are pastors and are rated in this category. Other officers of the church include the following in order of importance: pastors, Assistant pastors, Deacon/Deaconess, and Elders.

Winners’ Chapel is generally organised in such a way that, at the very top of the administrative bloc is the National Church, which is the umbrella body of Winners’ Chapel worldwide. It is located in Nigeria and further divided into dioceses. The next administrative bloc are regions which are constituted by a group of countries in the foreign mission. For example, Cameroon, Congo Kinshasa, Equatorial Guinea and Central African Republic make up the Central African Region of Winners’ Chapel. Provinces are individual nations. For example, Cameroon is a province. Within a province you have Districts, Zones, Areas and the Local Assemblies. These different blocs of power ensure that there is a proper transmission of the ideas and spiritual power of Bishop Oyedepo through the various officers, from Nigeria down to the local assemblies in the provinces that are located in foreign

¹⁵² Ibid.

territories. Oyedepo has thus commented that the various officers in the hierarchy of the church ‘serve as vital spiritual props for the office of the President so as to enhance his visionary responsibilities in leading the church into the future’.¹⁵³ This is even clearer in the roles that Oyedepo occupies in his organisation as described in the preceding sections.

The organisation or arrangement of power in Winners’ Chapel reveals that power and authority rests solely in the hand of Bishop Oyedepo, the founder leader of the church. This is understandable because as the church founder, Oyedepo believes and has consistently argued that he alone understands the mission for which God called him and is therefore the most pivotal person to fulfil that mission or ‘Mandate’. This explains why during interviews in Cameroon, respondents constantly referred to the Mandate and insisted that everything that happens in Winners’ Chapel is divinely directed following divine revelations to the Bishop who then passes them down to the adherents for implementation. But the setting up of structures of administration shows that Oyedepo wishes to share his power/authority in order to attend his goals. However, his direct influence in all facets of administration through appointments and dismissals of those who sit on various boards of the church and his skill in keeping multiple positions of authority or sharing them with family members, means that his grip on power is uncompromising. Oyedepo even suggests that Winners’ Chapel is an apostolic ministry where the position of priesthood is a permanent. For this reason, Oyedepo maintains that the Presidency in Winners’ Chapel shall be for a lifetime.¹⁵⁴ Within the power discourses and arrangements of Winners’ Chapel, it is not difficult to see parallels to ‘the values

¹⁵³ Oyedepo, *The Mandate*, 228.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 259.

that legitimate charismatic power' as interpreted by Peter Blau. In his critical remarks on Weber's theory of authority', Blau suggested that:

Charismatic authority defines a leader and his mission as being inspired by divine or supernatural powers... there is a sense of being "called" to spread the new gospel... and devotion to the leader and the conviction that his pronouncements embody the spirit and ideals of the movement are the source of the group's willing obedience to his commands.¹⁵⁵

In his study of the RCCG, Ukah Asonzeh found a complicated structure of authority because of the many units of administration which included varying concentrations of power.¹⁵⁶ Ukah shows that the highest position of authority in RCCG is the General Overseer who doubles as the national and international leader as exemplified in his occupation of both offices respectively in Lagos and Loburo, Ogun State, Nigeria.¹⁵⁷

The various structures and hierarchies of power that are exhibited in Winners' Chapel and RCCG show the extent to which power is concentrated in the office of founders/leaders of APCCs and how power is used by them. This may explain why Pastor Enoch Adeboye remarked that 'God is not a Democrat'.¹⁵⁸ In his 1993 speech as President of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) during their second biennial meeting, Adeboye argued that 'everybody must take orders from the commander in chief. No arguments, no debates'.¹⁵⁹ He dreamed of a PFN that would serve as an invading army in challenging the socio-political and spiritual deadlock in Nigeria's failed political economy that politicians had failed to overturn. However, Adeboye used his experience in the RCCG-which he leads, to illustrate his

¹⁵⁵ Peter Blau, 'Critical Remarks on Weber's Theory of Authority', *The American Political Science Review* 57, no. 2 (1963): 308.

¹⁵⁶ Ukah, 'The Redeemed Christian Church of God', 108.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ruth Marshall-Fratani, *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 202.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

perception of power and authority and then recommended the same to his colleagues, thus:

When I became the General overseer of the RCCG, everybody was doing what he thinks is right in his own sight. Ask someone to go on transfer, they will tell you, 'let me go and pray about it', or they may even resign, or take the church away. Then all of a sudden the Holy Spirit moved. He did something that I am praying He will do among the Pentecostals. All of a sudden, we held a meeting, we reached an agreement that from now on, once the General overseer has spoken, the pastors will see to it that it comes to pass.¹⁶⁰

Ruth Marshall-Fratani has drawn several lessons from Adeboye's speech, including: the miraculous power of God and his capacity to directly intervene in the everyday political life of the nation through the prayers and exhortations of those who are 'on His side'; the transnational nature of the Pentecostal community; and the institutional representation of Pentecostals through the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, as having a primordial role to play in the religious, and political future of Nigeria and other African countries. And the institution of a sovereign power which controls the conduct of subordinates in the movement.¹⁶¹ Marshall-Fratani concludes that born-again political spirituality develops a negative political theology but also signals avenues through which their aims can be achieved mainly through 'strategies of domination and exploitation and a politics of exclusion or even vengeance'.¹⁶² What emerges from the analysis is that APCC leaders reserve certain forms of power and influence, which may be intended to properly manage the affairs of the church and possibly transmit their spiritual power to adherents, near and far.

Kuponu's PhD thesis supplies us with useful analysis of the organisation and structure of power in Winners' Chapel while Marshall-Fratani complements his

¹⁶⁰ Enoch Adeboye, 'Who is on the Lord's Side', Address, PFM Biennial Conference, Lagos, 13 February 1993, Quoted in Marshall-Fratani, *Political Spiritualities*, 201-4.

¹⁶¹ Marshall Fratani, *Political Spiritualities*, 204.

¹⁶² Ibid.

thesis with the sovereign nature of APCC leaders in the administration of their churches both locally and globally. This shows the global extent of Pentecostal charismatic power across national and transnational boundaries and remains relevant for the present study. In chapter 5 of this study, we will use Kuponu's data will be used to explicate the hierarchies of Power in Cameroon in order to show any similar or dissimilar trends and what it means in intra-African Pentecostalism. Michael Smith *et al* argue that it is important to compare 'practices of the same group, in different localities, whether it is a migrant group or a participating component of a transnational social movement in order to determine the effect of localities'.¹⁶³ That notwithstanding, the missionary motivations and strategies of religious movements on the move are important components for understanding their aspirations and operation dynamics.

3.7. Missionary Motivations and Strategies of Winners' Chapel

Winners' Chapel chronicles its missionary mandate on its website in a bid to justify its missionary endeavour thus:

Our Mandate speaks of liberation in all facets of human existence; we focus mainly on destinies that have been afflicted, battered, beaten, tattered, deformed and subsequently in groaning and agonies, as a result of pains, pangs and crying... The hour has come to liberate the world from all oppressions of the Devil through the preaching of the word of faith, and I am sending you to undertake this task.¹⁶⁴

These statements encapsulate the missionary mandate and challenges that the Winners' Chapel has set out to fulfil. They justify mission especially in terms of the revitalisation of the lives of people who have been afflicted by all kinds of vicissitudes, both physical and spiritual. The statements link this mandate to the

¹⁶³ Michael P. Smith and Luis Guarnizo, *Transnationalism from Below*. Comparative Urban and Community Research; vol. 6 (New Brunswick, N.J: London: Transaction, 1998), 28.

¹⁶⁴ Winners' Chapel International, 'Our Mandate', available at: <http://www.winnerschapeledmonton.org/our-mandate>: (Accessed 03/04/2017).

commissioning of the founder-leader of the church, Bishop Oyedepo, with responsibility for pioneering the liberation of the suffering masses, and they decisively define the scope of their outreach as limitless. It would entail the liberation of the entire world from all forms of oppression by empowering men and women to take their destinies into their own hands.

Tomas Drønen has commented that Bishop David Oyedepo is an example of a pastor who has ‘gone global,’ as evidenced by the internationalisation of his ministry and his conversion narrative.¹⁶⁵ But Drønen interrogates Oyedepo’s commissioning and missionary mandate with a view to establishing whether it was necessary for a former Cherubim and Seraphim pastor (i.e., David Oyedepo)¹⁶⁶ to be born again in order to start a ministry. He suggests that the transition in Oyedepo’s Christian life from being a pastor in an Aladura or praying church that upholds ‘other-worldliness’ to being the founder of a prosperity church that emphasises this-worldliness and an obsession with wealth and materialism *par excellence* is intriguing.¹⁶⁷ The doctrinal philosophy of Winners’ Chapel is expressed in slogans such as ‘I am a winner,’ ‘I am smelling success,’ ‘Be a winner in Jesus Christ,’ ‘Winning Ways,’ ‘I am on the winning side’.¹⁶⁸ Paul Gifford has therefore maintained that, according to such Pentecostal doctrine, a Christian is a success: if not, something is wrong.¹⁶⁹

Kuponu analyses the missionary motivation and scope of the LFCW by deconstructing the church’s logotype, which is fashioned in the form of a globe with five tongues of fire protruding upwards.¹⁷⁰ Kuponu argues that this protrusive fire of tongues burning out of a representation of the world alludes to the diverse ministries

¹⁶⁵ Drønen, *Pentecostalism, Globalisation and Islam in Cameroon*, 72.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Kuponu, ‘The Living Faith Church’, 2.

¹⁶⁹ Gifford, ‘Trajectories in African Christianity’, 283.

¹⁷⁰ Kuponu, ‘The Living Faith Church’, 1.

within the LFCW through which it impacts on the world, while the globe itself indicates the targeted sphere of influence of the church:¹⁷¹ not merely any area in which the Winners' Chapel, a Nigerian-founded church, intends to wield power over other churches and people both in Nigeria and elsewhere, but also public spaces in local and global contexts, for the church sees itself as an organisation whose activities transcend the territorial boundaries of Nigeria.¹⁷² This initiative is facilitated by a missionary organisation called The Living Faith World Outreach Centre (LFWOC), 'whose primary objective is the general development and upliftment of mankind by stirring up the God given potentials embedded in people of all races and nations through the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ'.¹⁷³

The use of the metaphor of fire (presumably that of the Holy Spirit) in representing the spread of Christianity as exemplified in the logo of the Winners' Chapel is a significant factor in Pentecostalist missionary discourse since it evokes memories of earlier instances of missionary engagement that were provoked by tongues of fire—prototypically, of course, in the case of the disciples of Jesus, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. This explains why some Pentecostal movements often seem to emphasise the role of fire or baptism in the Holy Spirit in their missionary endeavours. Daniel Walker is, therefore, justified in entitling his doctoral dissertation, *The Pentecost Fire is Burning: Models of Mission Activities in the Church of Pentecost*,¹⁷⁴ suggesting that the growth and expansion of the Church of Pentecost (CoP) from Ghana to other parts of Africa and elsewhere is understood as having been engineered by the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷⁵ Walker demonstrates how within the CoP people who become baptised in the Holy Spirit immediately start

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Winners' Chapel International, 'Our Mandate', available at: <http://www.winnerschapeledmonton.org/our-mandate>: (Accessed 03/04/2017).

¹⁷⁴ Daniel Walker, 'The Pentecost Fire is Burning'.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

preaching and converting others to the church. It is the multiplier-effect of such conversions that is responsible for the exponential growth of the Church of Pentecost worldwide.¹⁷⁶ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu concurs that the rise of contemporary Pentecostalism and the revival of Christianity in Africa and elsewhere give practical expression to the work of the Holy Spirit as blowing wind.¹⁷⁷ Asamoah-Gyadu uses Jesus's encounter with Nicodemus recorded in John 3 as his evidence for this dynamic and argues that, in this encounter, Jesus sees Nicodemus's Pharisaism as representative of the old, static, orthodox religious order, but the Spirit as a blowing wind, representing change: 'The wind blows wherever it pleases.'¹⁷⁸ The belief in the role of the Holy Spirit as primordial in Pentecostal mission seems preoccupying within their ranks. However, a reliance on what Pentecostals understand as Spirit baptism is not of itself sufficient to propel the missionary enterprise of the Christian Church, which explains why, in addition to the influence of the Holy Spirit in mission, the Winners' Chapel also employs the services of the LFWOC to define its missionary praxis.¹⁷⁹

Another significant missionary strategy of the Winners' Chapel is the Dominion Publishing House (DPH), the publishing arm of DOMI. The aim of this publishing house is the dissemination of knowledge through print media with a view to the liberation of its readers because, as Bishop David Oyedepo argues, 'the degree of truth you know determines your degree of freedom... It is the vision of Dominion House to produce and flood the market with quality books that would be within the

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* (Oxford: Regnum 2013), 1.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Faith Tabernacle. Canaanland, OTA: Living Faith Church Worldwide, 'Dominion Publishing House', available at: <http://faithtabernacle.org.ng/aboutus/dph>: (Accessed 03/04/17).

reach of the average reader'.¹⁸⁰ Pastor Dr E. A. Adeboye, general overseer of the RCCG, officially commissioned the DPH on 5 December 1992 at the National Arts Theatre in Lagos.¹⁸¹ It seems to have been an opportunity for the founder-leader of the Winners' Chapel to exhibit publicly the church's initiative and ability to use the media in propagating the gospel of Christ. Six new books by Bishop Oyedepo were dedicated during the commissioning ceremony with titles such as *Releasing the Supernatural, Understanding Vision, Excellency of Wisdom, and Covenant Wealth*. Dr Oyedepo later noted that such publications are not intended to generate money but to stop people from mourning: 'We owe people education and this is what we are doing with the "Word of Faith" in print, it is a ministry of illumination by literature.'¹⁸² Bishop Oyedepo remarked at the commissioning of the DPH that 'the printed word enhances personal ministry, extends personal ministry, refines personal ministry and perpetuates personal ministry. Books, tracts and newsletters will go into places a person would not be able to reach'.¹⁸³

There seems to be an important link between media and religion in the study of contemporary religion and Christian mission because most religious movements are resorting to the mediatisation of religion and the religionisation of the media in their outreach endeavours. The media in question could be individual church websites, TV channels, radio programmes, and also the publications of founder-owners of churches, which are used to showcase the churches' vitality and visibility and to facilitate their missionary outreach. Thus, recent scholarly work on religious media has foregrounded the potential for this central category of analysis in the study

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Faith Tabernacle. Canaanland, OTA: Living Faith Church Worldwide, 'Dominion Publishing House', available at: <http://faithtabernacle.org.ng/aboutus/dph>: (Accessed 03/04/17).

of religion to provide fresh perspectives on many of the core concepts in the social sciences.¹⁸⁴ Such concepts include those of power, representation, transformation, citizenship, authority, diaspora and agency.¹⁸⁵ Innocent Chilwa has employed a sociolinguistic-based discourse analytical approach to examine how African-Christian activities are negotiated and practised on the internet. His study shows that worshippers view the media as a sacred space solely for spiritual matters and not for sharing social or individual feelings and problems.¹⁸⁶ No wonder, another scholar, Larsen has concluded that the Internet has become ‘spiritualised’ because worshippers employ common discourses in the Internet or popular media for religious intentions.¹⁸⁷ However, it is Rosalind Hackett who puts these views into proper perspective by suggesting that ‘the use of the media is clearly a tool of expansion, a reflection of globalising aspirations, but it is also part of a calculated attempt to transform and Christianise popular culture so that it is safe for consumption by 'born-again' Christians’.¹⁸⁸

While such claims are illuminating in that they emphasise the power of the media to transcend local and national boundaries and indicate that people might be attracted to Christianity through the reading of Christian print literature, they nevertheless leave one uncertain as to how many people actually read these books or have access to other modern media—especially in remote parts of Africa where many people work on their farms from morning to evening and return home tired; the majority, too, lack the electricity that could provide them with light with which to

¹⁸⁴ Rosalind Hackett, Anne Melice, Steven Van Wolputte and Katrien Pupe, ‘Interview: Rosalind Hackett reflects on media in Africa’, *Social Compass* 61, no. 1 (2014): 68.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Innocent Chilwa, ‘Community and Social Interaction in Digital Religious Discourse in Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon’, *Journal of Religion, Media & Digital Culture* 2, no. 1 (2013): 1-2.

¹⁸⁷ E. Larsen, ‘Cyberfaith: How Americans Pursue Religion Online’, in L. Dawson and D. Cowan (eds.) *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet* (London: Routledge, 2004), 17-20.

¹⁸⁸ Rosalind Hackett, ‘Charismatic/Pentecostal appropriation of media technologies in Nigeria and Ghana’, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28, no. 3 (1998): 258.

read or the means of watching television or accessing the internet. But such claims are significant in the light of the time-honoured assumption that ‘if you want to hide something from blacks, you put it in books’. If there is (as there certainly seems to be) compelling evidence that such Christian publications are being increasingly consumed, especially in Africa by Africans, then such a claim about the efficacy of hiding information from Africans in books is clearly untenable. With literacy rates increasing among Africans and throughout the world, the role of print media in the journey of Christianity becomes vital. Earlier precedents for the role of print media in the advancement of Christianity abound.¹⁸⁹ It is therefore not surprising that the LFCW is employing such tactics to establish branches in various parts of the globe, and to promote its values and principles including in Cameroon, the context of this study.

¹⁸⁹ Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, *From Times Square to Timbuktu: The Post-Christian West Meets the Non-Western Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2013), 2.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Emergence and Proliferation of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon

4.1. Introduction

This chapter sets out to investigate the emergence of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon and its proliferation dynamics. There are two main objectives that are handled in the chapter: the first is to investigate the reasons for the emergence of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon; and the second is to investigate the growth and proliferation dynamics of the church. Two different Cameroonian cities-Buea and Yaoundé-are used to illustrate how the church after establishing itself in Douala, through the missionaries started proliferating to other cities in Cameroon.

4.2. Winners' Chapel in Cameroon: Beginnings

Two missionaries from Nigeria whose names were reported to the researcher as Steve Budgie and Onajide introduced Winners' Chapel to Cameroon in 1996.¹ They were functioning under the auspices of AGIP of the World Mission Agency of Winners' Chapel.² Bishop Oyedepo created AGIP on 8 May 1994 in order to facilitate the penetration of the rest of Africa with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.³ The first set of missionaries sent out by AGIP left Nigeria on January 15 1995 and headed

¹ All attempts to get the full names of the missionaries proved abortive especially because Winners' Chapel in Cameroon seems not to be interested in keeping a record of the missionaries who come from Nigeria or are unwilling to give out information about the church. Another reason may be because the national leaders of the church or missionaries are replaced every two years which will mean keeping a substantial number of names.

² Bishop Oyedepo prefers his church to be called Living Faith Church Worldwide which is one branch of David Oyedepo Ministries International (DOMI). The African Gospel Invasion Programme (AGIP), the Dominion Publishing House (DPH), Faith Academy, Covenant University, Gilead Medial Centre and the Word of Faith Bible Institute (WOFBI) are the other branches of Oyedepo's conglomerate. See Selome Kuponu, 'The Living Faith Church', 36.

³ Pastor Dominic Nanje, Interview (19/11/15), Douala. This is the real name of the respondent. He had asked me to quote him.

for seven African countries.⁴ Beginning with Bible Schools in which they drilled their adherents in faith and prosperity teachings, the missionaries were able to open the first Winners' Chapel congregations in 1995 in Ethiopia, Kenya, Zaire, Uganda, and Brazzaville in the Republic of the Congo, Monrovia in Liberia and Freetown in Sierra Leone.⁵ Cameroon belongs to the second group of countries to which AGIP missionaries were sent in March 1996, including Togo, Republic of Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ghana, Cote D'Ivoire and Senegal.⁶

The missionaries to Cameroon came by road, passing through the area of Mamfe, and travelling on to the coastal city of Limbe, both in the South West Region of Cameroon. After spending about a month in Limbe and probably finding it difficult to make any gains, the missionaries moved to Douala, the economic capital of Cameroon, where they finally settled to begin their missionary activities in April 1996.⁷ Douala seems to have been their preferred destination because, in addition to being the economic capital of Cameroon with all its attendant facilities, Douala is the most populated city in Cameroon with an ever-growing population.⁸ The population of Douala is estimated at 2,800,000 and consists of a sizeable foreign community, with particularly large Nigerian and French populations.⁹ It is also the richest city in Central Africa with a distinguished cosmopolitan outlook and the busiest international airport in Cameroon. It may have been the ambition to benefit from the strategic importance of Douala that attracted Winners' Chapel missionaries. However, some Winners' Chapel members and leaders argue that the Bishop had

⁴ Ojo, 37.

⁵ Ojo, 'Transnational Religious Networks', 170.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Pastor Nanje, Interview (19/11/15), Douala.

⁸ Pastor Silas Yong, Interview (12/01/16), Douala.

⁹ Thomas Gale, *World Encyclopaedia of Nations: Cameroon*, Copyright, 2007, available at: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/places/africa/cameroon-political-geography/cameroon#RELIGIONS>: (Accessed 06/12/16).

received a divine mandate to found the church in Douala.¹⁰ According to a Cameroonian respondent:

I was not even a member of Winners' Chapel when the church spread to Cameroon but according to Bishop Oyedepo's vision and what he told us in most of our meetings that he had to spread and Cameroon was one of the countries that God showed him in that vision. He told us that God directed him to start the church in Douala and that is why missionaries from Winners' Chapel Nigeria first established themselves in Douala.¹¹

As previously mentioned, the missionaries first settled in Limbe for about a month and probably failed to gain ground there before moving to Douala. This may suggest that the missionaries might have been looking for fertile ground and were not in fact following the so-called vision of Bishop Oyedepo at this stage. However, some scholars have helpfully argued that Pentecostal Charismatic Church leaders prefer to establish their churches in urban centres where they can capture the upwardly mobile and the rich of society. Lovemore Togarasei illustrates this point in his article, "Modern Pentecostalism as an Urban Phenomenon..." where he argues that the preferred area of business of the Family of God Church in Zimbabwe is the urban settings where it attracts the middle and upper classes of society often resident there.¹² Seleina Parsitau *et al* concur with their article entitled, "God in the City..." in which they refer to Pentecostalism as an urban phenomenon in Kenya.¹³ It is no wonder then that Winners' Chapel missionaries decided to begin their exploits in Douala.

The immediate location of the missionaries in Douala was in Bonaberi, an area that is predominantly occupied by Anglophone Cameroonians, where they

¹⁰ Pastor Mathew Fing, Interview.

¹¹ Pastor Paul Menyole, Interview (04/02/16), Douala.

¹² Lovemore Togarasei, 'Modern Pentecostalism as an urban phenomenon: The case of the Family of God Church in Zimbabwe', *Exchange* 34, no. 4 (2005): 349-375.

¹³ Damaris Seleina Parsitau and Philomena Njeri Mwaura, 'God in the city: Pentecostalism as an urban phenomenon in Kenya', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 36, no. 2 (2010): 95-112.

probably hoped to engage with the people without any language barrier. But how were the missionaries going to begin their mission in Cameroon without any previous encounter either with people of the area or with an existing congregation? They started by visiting existing Pentecostal churches in Cameroon on Sunday mornings where they would introduce themselves as missionaries from Winners' Chapel, Nigeria who had come to provide biblical training to members of existing churches.¹⁴ In order to dismiss any suspicion of trying to recruit members from these churches, the missionaries claimed that they were not intending to open churches but were only interested in forming partnerships with existing churches and empowering the latter's members to 'ignite' the fire of the Holy Ghost within their churches.¹⁵ The claim by Winners' Chapel missionaries not to open churches in Cameroon resonated well with an earlier proposition by their leader, Bishop Oyedepo. Oyedepo had suggested that:

When the Mandate was delivered in 1981, I saw it mainly as an outreach, because at that time, church planting was not considered relevant. We were more concerned about believing God for revival in the existing churches. Also, when the Mandate was delivered, church wasn't particularly mentioned. I thought it was going to be an outreach ministry. My stand was that there were enough churches already, so we didn't need another one.¹⁶

It will become clear in the remainder of this thesis that Bishop Oyedepo claims that God has delivered everything that is happening in Winners' Chapel to him – from the foundation of the church in 1983 to its establishment worldwide, including all the structures put in place to manage its operations. All these are recorded in the Mandate. Bishop Oyedepo claims that the vision he received from God to found his

¹⁴ Pastor Nanje, Interview (19/11/15), Douala.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ David O. Oyedepo, *The Mandate, Operational Manual: Living Faith Church Worldwide aka Winners Chapel International*, Dominion Publishing House: Nigeria, 2012, 20.

ministry concerned the opening of outreach bible institutions and not church planting because the latter was not very relevant at the time. He seems to have believed that since there were already many churches in existence, adding new ones would not have been helpful. What seems to be obvious is that Oyedepo assumed that even though there were churches in Cameroon, these churches were not spiritual enough to bring about any revival in the lives of Christians and Cameroon as a whole. He would use his biblical education to empower existing churches across the world but especially in Africa. This would explain the initial mode of operation of the ‘missionaries’ to Cameroon, where they indeed established partnerships with existing churches in order to train some of their members and consequently bring about a revival in Cameroon. Some of the churches the missionaries visited and with which they created initial partnerships in Cameroon were The Full Gospel Mission Cameroon, the Apostolic Church and the Faith Bible Church, all of them Pentecostal churches.¹⁷ However, it was the Faith Bible Church¹⁸ that seems to have presented the golden opportunity that was necessary to begin the Bible School. In June 1996, the missionaries visited the founder and senior pastor of Faith Bible Church, Rev. Zach Njafuh in Bonaberi. As they introduced themselves and made clear their mission agenda (to start Bible Schools and train people who already belonged to other churches), Njafuh possibly imagined that his church would benefit from this supposed spiritual largesse of the Nigerian missionaries. He therefore invited them to minister to the church congregants the next Sunday morning.¹⁹ Their ministry created a huge impact in the lives of the Faith Bible Church members to the extent that a

¹⁷ Pastor Mathew Fing, Interview (19/11/15), Douala.

¹⁸ According to the website of the Faith Bible Church, ‘Faith Bible Church was founded on the 21st August 1994 by Rev. Zach Njafuh, Senior Pastor. He is said to be commissioned by God to minister to the whole man (soul, spirit and body). God gave him a mandate to minister the uncompromised Word of God and to demonstrate His healing power to this generation. FBC (the headquarters) is a church of about 1000 members presently. She started her expansion in 1999 and now has 8 branch churches around the nation’, available at: <http://faithbiblec.org>: (Accessed 13/12/16).

¹⁹ Pastor Mathew Fing, Interview.

member of the church opted to host the missionaries during their time in Cameroon and later provided them with the first Cameroonian indigenous worker of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. The worker in question served as a secretary to the missionaries by receiving and introducing any guests to them and keeping records of the activities of the missionaries in Cameroon.²⁰ He is now one of the church's accountants and pastor of a local Winners' Chapel congregation in Douala.²¹

After their ministry that Sunday morning the missionaries announced that they were to begin the Bible School the very next day, and that is how the Bible School began in late 1996 at 'Centre Caisse in Bonaberi'.²² Eleven members were in attendance on that first Monday.²³ The Bible School classes were held on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays and they taught courses on prosperity, health and wealth. Initially, those who attended the Bible classes were asked by the missionaries to go to their various churches on Sunday mornings and to attend the Bible School only on the selected days of the week.²⁴ By August 1996, the number of people attending the Bible School had risen from eleven to over fifty and was showing no sign of abating.²⁵ The meeting space at Centre Caisse Bonaberi became too small partly because many other people had to come from the Douala city centre and neighbouring cities like Buea to attend the programs in Bonaberi. The group then decided to move toward Douala city centre where they hoped to find a bigger property to accommodate the growing numbers, and significantly address the problem of transportation.²⁶ They found a rented property next to Akwa called Rue Bebey Eyidi and officially started the Word of Faith Bible Institute (henceforth

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Pastor Mathew Fing, Interview.

²⁵ Pastor Mathew Fing; Pastor Victor Bong, Interview (02/02/16), Douala.

²⁶ Pastor Mathew Fing, Interview.

WOFBI) programmes in Cameroon in November 1996.²⁷ However, the Bible School seemed to have raised the spiritual appetite of the attendees who began to clamour for the commencement of regular worship services on Sunday mornings in order to enjoy the full benefits of an established Pentecostal Charismatic Church. Some of these benefits would include more formal and regular Sunday morning worship services and related church programmes within the week.

4.2.1. From Bible School to Sunday Church Services: The Establishment of Winners' Chapel Congregations in Cameroon

The establishment of the Bible School in Douala with its health and wealth prosperity teachings was doubtless relevant for its followers at a time when Cameroon was suffering from economic meltdown.²⁸ Moreover, those who were worshipping in classical Pentecostal churches such as the Full Gospel Mission International were impressed because they began to discover another interpretation of the scriptures, which did not condemn the pursuit of material blessings but rather promoted it.²⁹ For many, it was the first time they were hearing particular teachings about prosperity, health and wealth being articulated in a convincing fashion and often backed by scripture.³⁰ The distinctiveness of these new teachings with the experience of signs and wonders led to an ever-increasing thirst for more and

²⁷ Ibid; The Word of Faith Bible Institute is the training arm of the Living Faith Church Worldwide. It offers a three-tier course namely: The Basic Certificate Course, Leadership Certificate Course and the Leadership Diploma Course. The courses offered cover areas like, the Word, Ministry, Family, Faith, Success, Purpose and Pursuit, Prayer and Prosperity. Church members are encouraged to take advantage of this program for their spiritual growth and development and to experience all-round outstanding transformations.

²⁸ Akoko, *'Ask and You Shall Be Given'*, 2007.

²⁹ Pastor Job Molewe, Interview (17/11/14), Buea.

³⁰ Ibid.

eventually the demand for the formation of a new church.³¹ One of my Cameroonian respondents recounts how he felt when he first attended WOFBI in July 1996:

I had been a Christian from birth and had attended the Roman Catholic Church before joining the Apostolic Church. But the day I attended the Word of Faith Bible Institute, everything was different. I had never been so touched by the word of God the way I felt. Those men could preach the word of God...What I really enjoyed was the way they were encouraging us to become rich, to make money, to be wealthy, to prosper. And they were using the Bible to support all the things they were telling us. The Apostolic Church was only telling us that our riches are in heaven. But I learned from these Nigerians that we should seek riches here on earth. What I have discovered with Winners' Chapel is their ability to transform man because their teachings are so practical and they give people the opportunity to develop their skills through the use of the Bible. That is how I fell in love with the Winners' Chapel family. Through their teachings, I am a prosperous man.³²

Most respondents who attended the WOFBI programmes organised by the Nigerian Winners' Chapel missionaries confirm that they felt the biblical instruction they received from the missionaries was extraordinary and transformational for both their material and spiritual wellbeing. This appears to have provoked them to demand the establishment of an independent church that would hold its own church services on Sunday mornings.

In early 1997 the missionaries started what they called *Manna from Heaven*, a weekly Sunday evening service from 16:00 to 18:00 hours. This was a service of worship and the proclamation of the word, though not a church service in a formal sense. Originally, those attending the Bible School who had not been to any church were invited to attend *Manna from Heaven* while others who belonged to existing churches were still advised to stay in their respective churches.³³ But this new initiative by the missionaries immediately sparked criticisms and controversy from

³¹ Ibid.

³² Pastor Joseph Wah, Interview (18/01/16), Buea-Tiko.

³³ Pastor Mathew Fing, Interview, Douala.

existing established Pentecostal churches such as the Apostolic Church who questioned why Winners' Chapel missionaries were running church services instead of staying true to their original plan to run only a Bible School.³⁴ Nevertheless, the crucial thing was the stigmatisation of those who were attending Winners' Chapel Bible School and other programmes by members of their former churches.³⁵ The critics were cynical about the new teachings and bemoaned the method of exegesis of biblical texts, which celebrated the prospect of material riches, health and wealth, and, in their view contradicted the gospel of Jesus Christ and the cross.³⁶ The critics even concluded that the missionaries and this new church by extension were out to make money and not to preach the word of God. Sometimes the followers were labelled as people who had missed their way.³⁷ Another respondent recalls how an elder of her former church-the Full Gospel Mission rebuked her:

What are you doing there? They don't talk about holiness but only about prosperity! Have those your preachers ever looked at what Jesus meant in the New Testament when he asked: 'what would it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? All they talk about is money, houses, cars, comfort and nothing else! I pity those of you who are following such misleading teachings in the name of the gospel'. However, I (respondent) told the elder that all that is being preached in the Winners' Chapel is in the Bible; it is just that the other churches don't want to teach the truth to their Christians. But I had to make up my mind completely to be attending *Manna from Heaven* and follow that church after the elder spoke to me like that. I was not happy with the way he spoke to me about something that I was really enjoying and knew it was the best thing.³⁸

Such derogatory and provocative questions and comments may have encouraged some of the WOFBI attendees to demand the establishment of a fully-fledged Winners' Chapel congregation in Cameroon that would accommodate those who felt

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Pastor Peter Toh, Interview (12/10/15), Douala.

³⁸ Ibid.

they were no longer being treated fairly in their former churches. These new converts also hoped they would at least feel at home with what they had come to believe was the true teaching of the Bible. This is true of another comment: 'It is the same Bible but you see new teachings coming out of it in a way members had never imagined. Some people kept asking, what is this new thing that we are hearing, let's go and see'.³⁹ Commenting on the missionary expansion of Winners' Chapel in Africa, Matthews Ojo argues that the missionaries' emphasis on success and prosperity in their teaching 'must have appealed to the young mobile educated people seeking self-expression within a modernisation milieu'.⁴⁰ Ruth Marshall-Fratani distinguishes between older forms of Pentecostalism such as the Full Gospel Mission and the newer forms such as Winners' Chapel when she maintains that, unlike these older churches which emphasise a doctrine of 'holiness' and anti-materialism, the new churches place themselves firmly in the world.⁴¹ She further suggests that in these new Pentecostal churches 'the fruits of a successful conversion and Christian life are as much material as spiritual; apart from a guaranteed place among the saints, Pentecostals are promised health, wealth, success, happy family lives, and the social, economic and political conditions in which to enjoy them'.⁴² Although it may be too simplistic to claim that one group of Pentecostals believe entirely in classic holiness doctrines and the other entirely in materialism,⁴³ it may be suggested that it was the transition from a predominantly 'holiness' gospel to a predominantly 'prosperity' one that encouraged most adherents of WOFBI to form a church that would fully engage those values.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ojo, 'Transnational Religious Networks', 170.

⁴¹ Marshall-Fratani, 'Mediating the global and local', 282.

⁴² Ibid, 285.

⁴³ The theological boundaries between Classical Pentecostal and Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches have become increasingly fluid in recent years.

Winners' Chapel Cameroon was officially launched in a rented Hall at 'Bus Du Travail'-Douala in late 1997 with 80 members.⁴⁴ When the missionaries first started the church, they introduced a policy that required all members joining the church to bring a letter from their former church to show that they had left the latter peacefully.⁴⁵ This decision may have been geared at silencing the critics of the missionaries by showing that they were not out to convert members from existing churches as they earlier suggested. It may also have been intended to show that the members were making their own decisions to leave their former churches for their newfound church based on their new spiritual experiences. Some pastors believe that this policy no longer obtains because the quest for new members to fill Winners' Chapel congregations has become primordial since large numbers signal growth, represent success and earns the pastor concerned a higher appointment or promotion to a bigger congregation or responsibility.⁴⁶

The gradual expansion of the church in Douala- created a need for the church to acquire a property of its own for worship purposes. The church had been using rented facilities but by early 2001, the church had experienced substantial growth from 150 to 500 members and by 2006 it had significantly expanded.⁴⁷ The leaders and church members decided to acquire a permanent property that would accommodate the growing church and enhance its mission in Cameroon.⁴⁸ Through the work of some faithful members, the church found a property at Carrefour Zachmann in Ndogbong, Douala in 2006. The property was later acquired with financial support from the international headquarters in Nigeria.⁴⁹ The church in

⁴⁴ Pastors Nanje and Victor Bong various Interviews in Douala.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Pastor Paul Menyole, Interview (04/02/16), Douala.

⁴⁷ Pastor Victor Bong, Interview, Douala.

⁴⁸ Pastor Mathew Fing, Interview, Douala.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Ndogbong remains the national headquarters of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon where all the administrative offices of the church are located and from where national officers of the church operate in Cameroon and relate to Nigeria. It has over 3,400 members who attend the church's two services every Sunday.⁵⁰

4.3. The Growth and Proliferation of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon

Reconstructions from interviews concerning the growth and proliferation of Winners' Chapel over a twenty-year period from 1996-2016 reveal a phenomenal trajectory in the church's growth rate in Cameroon. Available official statistical information obtained in Douala shows that in 2015 there were 129 congregations of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. 62 and 51 of these are found in the Christian-majority Francophone and Anglophone Regions, respectively and 8 are located in the three Northern Regions, which are also Francophone but Muslim-dominated and another 8 are found in neighbouring countries which are considered as part of the province of Cameroon according to Winners' Chapel arrangement.⁵¹ These other branches include: Malabo in Equatorial Guinea, Ndjamena, Doba, Moundou, Abeche, Bongor in Chad and Guadalupe-Sao Tome and Trinidad-Sao Tome. The number of Winners' Chapel congregations in the province of Cameroon is represented in the chart below.

⁵⁰ Personal conversations with Pastor Dominion, national Pastor of Winners Chapel Cameroon (2013-current). I had several conversations with Pastor Dominion in 2014, 2015 and 2016 during my fieldwork in Cameroon.

⁵¹ Winners' Chapel Locations in the Region, 2015 statistics: Document obtained in Douala, 05/02/2016.

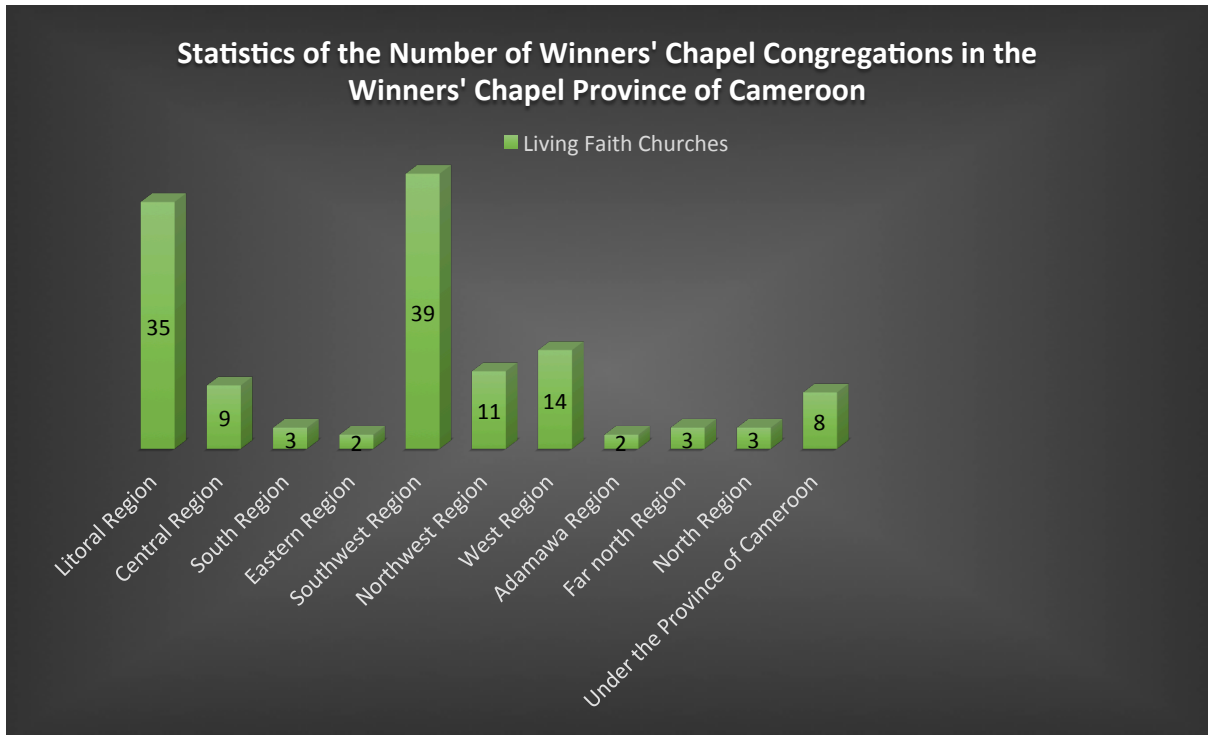


Figure One: Statistics of the number of Winners' Chapel congregations in the Winners' Chapel province of Cameroon.⁵²

⁵² This chart and table has been created from a document entitled, 'Winners Chapel Locations in the Region, 2015 statistics': Document obtained in Douala, 05/02/2016, and in the possession of the author. Details of the various congregations according to specific cities are provided in Appendix B.



Figure Two: Showing the Political Map of Cameroon with the major cities where Winners' Chapel churches are found.

The chart shows the distribution of the congregations according to the ten administrative regions of Cameroon, including the eight congregations found in neighbouring countries, which fall under Winners' Chapel province of Cameroon.⁵³ Douala, Yaoundé, Ebolowa, Bertoua, Bafoussam are Francophone cities located in the southern part of Cameroon. Ngaoundéré, Maroua and Garoua are additional Francophone regions that are located in the Northern part of Cameroon and are Muslim-dominated. Buea and Bamenda represent the two Anglophone regions of Cameroon located in southern Cameroon. The chart shows that there are 129 congregations spread throughout the ten regions of Cameroon and covering the Winners' Chapel province of Cameroon. The Anglophone South West region of Cameroon has the highest number of Winners' Chapel congregations, followed by the Francophone Littoral Region, which is the economic capital of Cameroon, while Adamawa and the Eastern regions both have the lowest.

It is possible that there may be more than 129 congregations of Winners' Chapel in the province of Cameroon because not all the branches seem to be mentioned in the document. There is evidence that suggests that some Winners' Chapel congregations exist in semi-urban and rural areas, which are not mentioned in official documents of the church. For example, there is a Winners' Chapel congregation in Wum, a semi-urban area not mentioned on the list.⁵⁴ One reason for this is because the church generally relies on the most affluent congregations that are located in the cities. This is the reason why none of the National Pastors of Winners' Chapel residing in Douala has ever visited the church in Wum since its creation some four years ago.⁵⁵ Moreover, the church in Wum was led by a woman, which seems to

⁵³ All nations where Winners' Chapel has extended and is spreading are known as provinces, which fall under a region. Cameroon is a province under the Central African Region of the Winners' Chapel.

⁵⁴ Participant observation in Wum (Bamenda) January 2016.

⁵⁵ Pastor Felicia Nain, Interview (03/01/16), Wum (Bamenda).

be problematic.⁵⁶ Apart from that, during interviews with some pastors and elders of the church, I obtained information which shows that there may be more Winners' Chapel congregations that are not mentioned in the official document in my possession.⁵⁷ Most of the Winners' Chapel churches in Cameroon are established in major cities of the country and led by Nigerian missionaries.⁵⁸ Chapter 3 of this study already highlighted how hierarchy and power are organised in Winners' Chapel International and argued that power trickles down from the nation to regions, provinces, districts, zones, areas, and church ministerial boards.

The umbrella body of the Winner's Chapel is the Nation⁵⁹ (Nigeria), headed by a national council whose chairman is Bishop Oyedepo. Next are Regions, constituted by several countries. For example, the Central African Region is made up of countries in central Africa. Cameroon is under this region and its headquarters is in Congo Kinshasa. The next in line are Provinces, which are the different countries that make up a Region. Cameroon is a province. Within a province, there are districts, Zones, Areas and Local Assemblies. All the different administrative blocs are headed by councils, charged with the spiritual and administrative oversight of the church network in their particular jurisdictions. The following smart chart shows the administrative structure of Winners' Chapel in the province of Cameroon and their representative leaders.

⁵⁶ One of my respondents in Douala argued that the Winners' Chapel does not employ the services of women for the pastorate and that they are not allowed to preach. But the pastor of Winners' Chapel Wum is a lady in her thirties and I attended at least two Sunday services and one Wednesday evening Communion service in the church which were presided over by her.

⁵⁷ Pastor Cyprian Kum, Pastor Joseph Wah, Deaconess Comfort Sih. Interviews in Douala and Buea-Tiko and Yaoundé respectively.

⁵⁸ Winners' Chapel Locations in the Region, 2015 statistics: Document obtained in Douala, 05/02/2016.

⁵⁹ The understanding of Nigeria as the 'nation' of Winners' Chapel may be synonymous to the nation of Israel in biblical history. This suggests that Nigeria is the chosen people of God or at least the privileged area where the main protagonist of the movement and spiritual giant of the church resides and from where the fortunes of his church radiate to other lands and peoples.

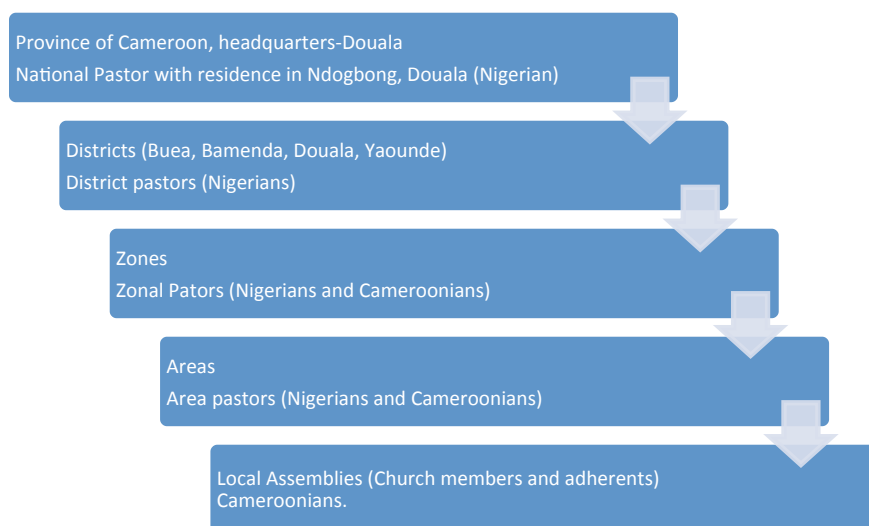


Figure Three: The administrative structure of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon in order of hierarchy from top down.⁶⁰

The province of Cameroon is made up of all Winners' Chapel congregations in Cameroon including 8 congregations in Equatorial Guinea, Chad and Sao Tome as shown on figure one.⁶¹ There are 4 Districts in the province (Buea, Bamenda, Douala and Yaoundé), led by Nigerian missionaries. There are 9 Zones in the province, also led by Nigerian missionaries and some Cameroonians.⁶² I was not able to get precise information about the Zones led by Nigerian missionaries and the ones led by Cameroonians nor did I obtain any information about the total number of Winners' Chapel Areas in the province of Cameroon. However, my informant estimates that there are approximately 20 Winners' Chapel Areas in Cameroon. The Province, districts, zones and areas are managed by councils led by chairpersons-who are all

⁶⁰ This smart chart has been adapted from the National Church Structure of the Winners Chapel as outlined in, Oyedepo, *The Mandate: Operational Manual*, 275.

⁶¹ See figure one for details of the total number of congregations in the province of Cameroon.

⁶² Pastor Peter Toh, Telephone conversation, (17/02/17). Pastor Peter is the administrator of the Winners Chapel in Cameroon.

pastors with direct connections to the leadership in Nigeria. There are currently about 20 Nigerian Winners' Chapel missionaries in Cameroon.⁶³

The organisation or structuring of power and hierarchy as presented in the chart shows that Nigerian missionaries control the church in Cameroon because of their strategic positions of leadership. It is possible to see the connection from Area to Zonal pastors to District pastors, to the National Pastor-who reports to the Regional Pastor in Congo Kinshasa for onward reporting to David Oyedepo in Nigeria. This arrangement is important, possibly to facilitate the proper functioning of Winners' Chapel but also to make sure that the spiritual and charismatic power of Bishop Oyedepo is adequately transmitted from Nigeria through the various blocs of power to his adherents in Cameroon and elsewhere.

Winners' Chapel began to witness a phenomenal growth and proliferation during the next decade of its existence in Cameroon and has now spread to all ten regions of Cameroon. Some oral sources suggest that there may be over 25,000 members of the church in Cameroon including a steady influx of new members.⁶⁴ However, some members give a more conservative estimate of fewer than 18,000 members and argue that it is difficult to get the exact number of members who come to the church because of the ways in which the census is conducted.⁶⁵ For example, Winners' Chapel congregations in Bonaberi and Ndogbong conduct two Sunday morning services each week (7:30-9:30am and 9:45-12pm), in order to minister to the growing number of Christians. In each of these services, attendance is taken by a head count and at the end of the day the two figures are put together, to determine how many members attended the service for that Sunday. The growth rate is thus

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Pastor Peter Toh, Interview, Douala

⁶⁵ Elder Isaiah Lah, Interview (12/11/15), Douala.

determined that way. However, this method takes no account of members who attend both services. During fieldwork, I discovered that, during the first service, pastors often treated a subject in the sermon and left out a few points promising that members needed to stay back for the second service if they desired to gain a full knowledge of the subject. For example, on 18 October 2015 the sermon was captioned: 'Understanding the Covenant right to fruitfulness and a healthy lifestyle'. Pastor Dominion suggested that his sermon was made up of seven points but only managed to dwell on four during the first service. The four points which he claimed were signs of being fruitful were: to be profitable, to be productive, to be constructive and to be useful. He then announced that the remaining three points would be handled during the second service and invited those attending the first service to stay back in order to complete their knowledge of the subject. In this way, some of those who attended the first service stayed back for the second service and were counted twice.⁶⁶ I estimate from observation that about twenty per cent of the members who attended the first service stayed back for the second. One of the office bearers in another Winners' chapel congregation in Douala revealed to me that all of the office bearers in the church are compelled to attend both services each week and are counted twice.⁶⁷ This category would include deacons, deaconesses, elders, bookstore keepers, accountants, office secretaries, cleaners, ushers and the choir (the choir in Ndogbong has more than twenty-five members). The total number of office bearers in Ndogbong alone may be more than 100 members. Another interesting revelation which questions the membership statistics of Winners' Chapel is that some registered members of historic mission churches attend the first service in Winners' Chapel from 7:30-9:30am and then go to attend the main service of the Presbyterian

⁶⁶ Participant observation in Douala.

⁶⁷ Elder Isaiah Lah, Interview, Douala.

Church Bonamoussaddi (which is not too far away from Winners' Chapel Ndogbong) at 9.30am. These members are also counted as belonging to Winners' Chapel and added to their census figures. Some respondents suggest that pastors of Winners' Chapel inflate census figures because growth/expansion or stagnation/decline are criteria for the respective promotion or demotion of pastors in Winners' Chapel.⁶⁸ This standard has forced ambitious pastors to employ such reporting tactics in order to suggest that they are doing well so as to enable them earn high positions in the church. Since the method of census is by head count, it is easy to manipulate the figures which are sent to Nigeria to suggest that the church is indeed growing and to earn the consequent rewards. Membership in historic mission churches is defined rather differently. For example, in the PCC, membership is identified by the possession of a membership card, which is controlled each month by the church minister and elders. However, the number of people attending each service is also recorded not as part of the census figures, but to note the specific number of people who attended that service. It seems likely that, on the basis of these arguments, the statistics presented about the number of members belonging to Pentecostal Charismatic Churches in Africa are often flawed. That is why I have argued elsewhere⁶⁹ that the startling statistics presented by Todd Johnson about the multiplication of APCC membership need to be interrogated and even contested. But, if it is difficult to verify the actual number of members who belong to Winners' Chapel in Cameroon, it is easier to determine the magnitude of spread of the church in terms of the number of congregations or cities where the church has been established, as shown on the chart above.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Amos Chewachong, 'Intra-National Pentecostalism and the Dynamics of Proliferation', See Todd Johnson, 'Christianity in its Global Context, 1970-2020: Society, Religion, and Mission (Centre for the Study of Global Christianity: Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary), June 2013.

From the inception of the church in Douala in 1997 the church first spread to Buea and Bamenda in 2002 and then to Yaoundé in 2003 before proliferating to other regions and cities. As previously mentioned, there were approximately 129 congregations of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon in 2015. The evidence thus clearly suggests that since 1997 there has been significant growth and proliferation of the church in Cameroon. We will now use two examples to illustrate how the church proliferated from Douala to other parts of Cameroon. The two cities to be used as exemplars are Buea and Yaoundé, being Anglophone and Francophone representative cities respectively.

4.3.1. Winners' Chapel: From Douala to Buea

The introduction of Winners' Chapel to Cameroon in 1996 was a welcome initiative for those who had a positive experience with the church elsewhere but were frustrated by its absence in Cameroon. For example, there were Cameroonians who had gone to study in Nigeria and had attended the church there and felt their teachings were empowering and their worship services inspirational.⁷⁰ The testimony of another respondent is revealing:

In November 1994, I went to Nigeria to study and being a member of Eglise Evangélique Du Cameroun; I decided to join the Lutheran Church of Nigeria because my church was not to be found there. After a year there was a kind of desire in me and the question arose, 'why church? Why go to church'. And then from there I moved to many churches and I found out that many of them were not churches, some were just doing their own things in the name of church and God. So one day, one of my neighbours who was a member of the Winners' Chapel spoke to me about God and the kind of life they used to live before joining the church and how their lives had changed completely. They invited me to Winners' Chapel and that was the last time I thought of another church. When I returned to Cameroon in 1998, I never knew that there was a Winners' Chapel in Cameroon until one day I met the Pastor who had been sent here in 1996 and he invited me to the church.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Pastor Cyprian Kum, Interview, Douala.

⁷¹ Pastor Victor Bong, Interview (02/02/16), Douala.

Members of Winners' Chapel such as the respondent quoted above appear to have returned to Cameroon hoping that the church would be established there so that they could continue with the same experiences they had encountered in Nigeria. Not being able to find a Winners' Chapel in Cameroon, some of these members travelled to Nigeria in order to attend church services and special occasions organised by Winners' Chapel. Some of them were business people from Nigeria who belonged to the church and, though they were living as immigrants in Cameroon, wanted to keep the connection with Winners' Chapel. According to a respondent:

I felt empty each time I worshipped in another church here in Cameroon and consequently felt the need to travel back to Nigeria whenever it was possible. I tried to visit Nigeria at least once a month to worship with other Winners'. That is my church and I will never leave it because the way they preach and teach and do their own things is very different from all the other churches, so when I am going for a business trip sometimes, I also try to do it on a weekend so that I can worship there at least before I return to Cameroon with the 'anointing'.⁷²

The establishment of the church in Douala meant that such members were now able to worship locally in Cameroon. It also meant that members of Winners' Chapel who resided in other parts of Cameroon could travel to Douala on Sundays and other weekdays to attend Winners' Chapel services and programs. For example, one of the Nigerian Vice-Consuls to Cameroon from 2001 to 2003 who was resident in Buea had been a member of Winners' Chapel in Nigeria and had previously travelled to Nigeria to attend church services. With the establishment of the church in Douala, she now had to drive on bad roads every Sunday across the traffic in Bonaberi to attend the church in Ndogbong-Douala.⁷³ But Douala itself is a vast city with a number of neighbouring towns from where some members and would-be members make long journeys in order to worship in Ndogbong. It has therefore become

⁷² Elder Jeremiah Bah, Interview (12/01/16), Douala.

⁷³ Pastor Joseph Wah, Interview (18/01/2016), Buea-Tiko.

necessary to create other branches in the country for proximity reasons and to enable local ministry.⁷⁴

Buea and Bamenda became the first priority centres for the expansion of Winners' Chapel from Douala in Cameroon. This may not be unconnected to the fact that these are both Anglophone cities of Cameroon and, while Buea is quite close to Douala (68.03km driving distance), Bamenda has often been regarded as the entrance point for most Pentecostal churches from Nigeria because of its proximity to Nigeria in terms of the border and the presence of a substantial Nigerian population, most of whom are businessmen and women.⁷⁵ However, the beginning of the church in Buea in fact owes much to the Nigerian Vice-Consul to Cameroon, as already mentioned. She was resident in Buea at the time and often travelled to Douala for Sunday services and on Wednesday for mid-week Communion services.⁷⁶ However, this increasingly became a burden because of the bad roads and other inconveniences of travelling.⁷⁷ As the Vice-Consul was a pioneer member of the church in Nigeria, Bishop Oyedepo personally knew her because of her passion for Winners' Chapel's mission in the world.⁷⁸ The Vice-Consul contacted Bishop Oyedepo in Nigeria and asked for a missionary to be sent to Buea to begin a church. She also provided the initial support that was necessary to begin this new congregation, including the use of her residence which was to be the first meeting point.⁷⁹ In early August 2002, Pastor Silas Okechuku was sent as a missionary from Nigeria to Cameroon and on 7th September 2002 the inaugural church service was held in the home of the Vice-Consul in Buea in the presence of seven members. Four of the pioneer members were

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Robert Akoko and Timothy Mbuagbo Oben, 'Christian Churches and the democratization conundrum in Cameroon', *Africa Today* 52, no. 3 (2006): 25-48.

⁷⁶ Pastor Joseph Wah, Interview (18/01/16), Buea-Tiko.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Deaconess Theresa Yong, Interview (18/01/16), Buea-Tiko.

former Winners' Chapel members in Nigeria and the other three were new converts to the church in Cameroon.⁸⁰ Pastor Clement Mbambad later joined Pastor Silas on 6 December 2002 and together they established the church in Buea.⁸¹ Through evangelistic activities, the church expanded from about 200 members in 2005 to over 800 members by 2013.⁸²

One important factor that led to the establishment of the church in Buea was the location that was chosen. The church was located along the Molyko road, outside the University of Buea and next to the Molyko congregation of the PCC.⁸³ This location exposed the church to passers-by, to the university students and to those who were attending the PCC and could attract anybody from this vantage point.⁸⁴ The banner which hung outside the church conspicuously bore the name, Winners' Chapel, and people noticed from it that there was something new in town but also wondered what was in this church that needed to be won and so wanted to find out. For example, Pastor Greenfield was a student at the university at that time and was one of those who were curious about this church. He came from the PCC to visit but finally stayed and later became one of the indigenous Cameroonian pastors of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon.⁸⁵ He testifies that Winners' Chapel's emphasis on prosperity, success, health and wealth was attractive to some students who had come from other regions of Cameroon and were facing challenges.⁸⁶ The prosperity theology may have ministered to their psychological and physical needs, and to some students its teaching appeared to be biblically based. Some of the students even saw Winners' Chapel as presenting a more authentic form of Christianity:

⁸⁰ Pastor Joseph Wah, Interview.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Pastor Greenfield Nchia, Interview (10/12/15), Douala.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

The first day I saw the poster of the Winners' Chapel, I was asking myself, which kind of church is this because I had never heard about it. I thought I should try to find out for myself what they meant by Winners' Chapel by visiting even once. When I got there that Sunday, the pastor was preaching about 'making a maximum impact'. I was going through serious pain because I had failed a course and I knew that I was the cause because I kept bad company and did not study hard enough. The pastor mentioned that the association you keep determines your future. Wise friends would lead you to wisdom but a bad company with fools leads to destruction. I thought that was helpful and that advice led to my conversion from the Presbyterian church to Winners' Chapel and has enabled me to overcome some of my weaknesses and today I am a Winner.⁸⁷

While *Maximum Impact*⁸⁸ is actually the title of a book by Bishop Oyedepo, the testimony of the respondent shows that he was attracted to the church by its name and that the message of the day about 'making a maximum impact' coincidentally spoke to his deepest needs because of which he was finally converted to the church. This view is corroborated by the testimony of another member of Winners' Chapel in Tiko:

When I was in the University of Yaoundé, I had always had this quest to know more about God and so I joined a charismatic Renewal Group called Ecumenical Christian Fellowship. It was non-denominational. When I left university, I went to other churches but my faith was not growing, I originally belonged to the Roman Catholic Church but was never satisfied with the way things were going, not for the churches, but for my life and my family. When I looked back at my family it was like, we were hopeless, there was no hope, nothing encouraging at all. Moreover, when I looked at my friends, my classmates and many other people soaring high, I started asking questions: But what is happening, what is wrong with me? That is how I got involved with charismatic activities. My life in the university became a testimony because for one year my name disappeared from the computer and everywhere in the University. There was no trace of me and that is when I joined Renewal Prayer Group asking God to help me out. At the end of the day, God resolved the problem and so from there, I now wanted to continue in the journey of Christ. But wherever I went, it was not going the way I expected and with the warning they had given us in the Roman Catholic Church that most of these Pentecostal churches were sects and cults and if you join them, you are finished, they will initiate you and at the end of the day will kill you. But when I came to Buea, I was actually teaching in a Catholic Secondary School. I met a sister who was a member of Winners'

⁸⁷ Ibid, Deaconess Clementine Ning, Interview (09/11/15), Buea.

⁸⁸ David Oyedepo, *Maximum Impact* (Lagos: Dominion Publishing House 2003), 213.

Chapel. After monitoring her life and seeing that she was exceptional in character and always looked fulfilled, I decided to visit the church. That is how I encountered Winners' Chapel and found that they were offering something that was unique and true. I felt at home and at peace with my soul and my life has since then been prosperous.⁸⁹

This narrative provides insights into the reasons why the respondent left the Roman Catholic Church for Winners' Chapel. The respondent particularly mentions hopelessness and the quest for spiritual and material prosperity as motives for joining Charismatic Renewal Movements and eventually, Winners' Chapel. However, the life-style of a fellow Winners' Chapel member became the last pull factor that enabled her to make the final decision to join the church. The woman in question 'was exceptional in character and always looked fulfilled'. My understanding of the conversion narrative of this respondent replies to Marshall-Fratani's suggestion that 'an inquiry into reasons for conversion should properly begin with an interrogation into what people are converting from...what aspects of the dominant 'socio-logic do people find oppressive or destructive? What opportunities do they see themselves as having been denied...'?⁹⁰

Another important reason to explain why the church in Buea became attractive was the graduation ceremonies that were organised by the church for those who were graduating from WOFBI.⁹¹ Pastor Sam observed that guests to these events received the preaching and teaching with appreciation and a new excitement and often decided to join the church.⁹² But the conversion of an indigene of Buea who was also a top-ranking official of the city must have provided the kind of validation that the church needed at this time of its infancy. This was the conversion

⁸⁹ Deaconess Theresa Yong, Interview, Buea-Tiko, 2016.

⁹⁰ Ruth Marshall-Fratani, 'Power in the Name of Jesus', *Review of African Political Economy* 18, no. 52 (1991): 25.

⁹¹ Pastor Sam, Interview, Tiko (Buea). This is the real name of the respondent because he asked me to quote him.

⁹² Ibid.

to the church of a former Mayor of the Buea Urban Council in late 2002. As an indigene and a leader of the community, many people were motivated to join the church because they felt that, by becoming a member of a 'foreign' church, the former Mayor had authenticated the practices of the movement in Cameroon. 'His presence in the church in Buea was therefore an open door for others to join'.⁹³

Evangelistic initiatives were also important. One of the places to which the church members first went for evangelisation was the Opportunity Industrialisation College in Buea. This was a fruitful venture because it yielded great results in the number of new young students who were recruited into the church and who became very involved in the Saturday morning evangelisation outings of the church and the winning of new members. The evangelisation outreach to a student-dominated area in Molyko and specifically to a school was deliberate because the leadership of the church thought that the youths are the future leaders of the country and, if they knew the truth and lived by the truth, their good and responsible lives would promote the development of the church and Cameroon as a whole.⁹⁴ In 2005, Pastor Ebuia Kum who together with other successive Cameroonian pastors grew the membership of the church from about 200 to over 800 members succeeded pastors Silas Okechuku and Clement Mbambad.⁹⁵ Due to increasing numbers, the church had to acquire a permanent site in 2010 behind the Buea Municipal Stadium on which they have built a permanent church house and from where they have been operating since 2013. Nigerian missionaries have been leading the church since 2011 when it was fully established.⁹⁶ There are currently about 400-500 members in the church in Buea, which represents a considerable decrease from over 900 during the years 2012 to

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Pastor Divine Bah, Interview (04/02/16), Douala.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

2013.⁹⁷ One reason for this decline might be the competition that the church is facing from emerging prophetic ministries, some of which have been introduced from Nigeria to Buea and others that have been founded by young Cameroonians who claim to have been called to the prophetic ministry. For example, the Buea-based self-proclaimed prophet, popularly known as Prophet Divine C. Okafor, runs the Life Transformers Ministry (LTM) in Muea which is very popular among students and attractive to them.⁹⁸ However, other Winners' Chapel branches have been created from the main Buea Assembly including, mile 16, Buea Town, Muea, Bomako, Bokova, Tiko and Ekona. The total number of Winners' Chapel members in the Buea district is about 1500.⁹⁹

Winners' Chapel in Buea developed from the grassroots because only a few existing members of Winners' Chapel were involved at this stage.¹⁰⁰ This meant that the pastors and older members had to embark on teaching the new converts the major tenets of Winners' Chapel as different from other ministries or churches in Cameroon.¹⁰¹ The aim of such intensive teaching was to challenge the notion people had about Winners' Chapel that it was an 'ideology'. They would often ask, 'What is Winners' Chapel?'¹⁰² Pastor Sam suggested that people needed to know that it was a real church with a foundation in Nigeria and now extending to other parts of the world and that the doctrines of the church were unique.¹⁰³ How were they to go about this teaching? Every new member of Winners' Chapel is expected to attend a two-

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Andrew Nsoseka, 'Prophet Divine Incarcerated for Sexually Harassing Followers, available at: <http://www.cameroonpostline.com/prophet-divine-incarcerated-for-sexually-harassing-followers>: (Accessed 30/01/16).

⁹⁹ Pastor Joseph Wah, Interview, Tiko.

¹⁰⁰ Pastor Sam, Interview, Douala.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

day course that is referred to as the Believers Foundation School¹⁰⁴ and is intended to teach and promote the basic doctrines and principles of the church, including the practice of baptism of the Holy Spirit. In Cameroon, these classes take place every Tuesday and Thursday for new members who have been evangelised on the preceding Saturday and have worshipped with the church on Sunday. After attending the Foundation School for two days, the members receive baptism by immersion on the following Saturday. Winners' Chapel leadership insist that all members joining the church who have either received baptism by sprinkling or as children must be re-baptised in order to enjoy full membership of their new found church. However, those baptised by immersion as adult believers in other Pentecostal or mission churches are not expected to be re-baptised. The Believers Foundation School prepares them for the rite but is also a prerequisite for full membership in the church because the doctrines and basic tenets of Winners' Chapel are taught in the school. When the church started in Buea, the Believers Foundation School was extended from two days to one month so that the new converts could effectively imbibe Winners' Chapel ideals.¹⁰⁵ This way, the leaders could be sure that members remained true to the values of the church and would not easily waver in their faith. In addition to the Believers Foundation School, all Winners' Chapel members are encouraged to attend the WOFBI.¹⁰⁶ One year after Winners' Chapel had extended from Douala to Buea, the next destination was Yaoundé-the political capital of Cameroon.

¹⁰⁴ The Believers Foundation School is the first place where new converts are taught the principles and practices of the Winners chapel. Courses on Water Baptism and baptism in the Holy Spirit, prosperity, success and wealth feature prominently in these classes. In Cameroon, such classes are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays before the new converts are baptized by immersion on the Saturday.

¹⁰⁵ Pastor Sam, Interview (18/01/16), Buea-Tiko.

¹⁰⁶ Elder Isaiah Lah, Interview (12/11/16), Douala.

4.3.2. Winners' Chapel: From Douala to Yaoundé

The first Winners' Chapel congregation in Yaoundé emerged in 2003 through the work of Winners' Chapel leaders from Douala and Pastor Peter Signie, who had been sent there by the then National Pastor Courage.¹⁰⁷ Pastor Courage had been posted to Cameroon from Nigeria in March 2003 as the National Pastor with residence in Douala. Here he met Pastor Peter whom he knew in Nigeria in 2001 where they attended WOFBI together.¹⁰⁸ The choice of Pastor Peter to open the church in Yaoundé was deliberate because he is originally from Douala in French-speaking Cameroon and was now perfectly bilingual because he had lived in Nigeria for a considerable period and studied in Winners' Chapel Bible School there. It was hoped that he would be able to penetrate both the predominantly French-speaking populations and also the English-speaking Cameroonians in the capital city of Yaoundé.¹⁰⁹ The first step toward the formation of the Yaoundé church was the sending of some church leaders (elders and deacons) from Douala to Yaoundé in 2002 to organise an evangelistic convention in the Hilton Hotel.¹¹⁰ Before the event, mass sensitisation was carried out in the city in order to prepare the ground and handbills carrying information about the church and inviting people to the convention were given out. During the convention, some responsible persons were identified and their contacts taken by the national office for future communications. Those who gave their lives to Christ on the day of the convention following the preaching and teaching were divided into groups and forums were created which were required to independently meet at least twice a week. The idea was that the members holding group meetings during the week would pioneer the establishment

¹⁰⁷ Deaconess Comfort Sih, Interview (27/01/16), Yaoundé.

¹⁰⁸ Pastor Peter Signie, Interview (02/02/16), Douala.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Pastor Peter Toh, Interview (12/10/16), Douala.

of Winners' Chapel in Yaoundé.¹¹¹ Pastor Peter had to rely on such people to begin the church. However, he recalls that on arrival in Yaoundé in 2003, he invited some of the responsible members to no avail. Even the supposed church leader in Yaoundé who was to host him did not take Pastor Peter's call when she heard that he was the one coming to open the church in Yaoundé.¹¹² One of the reasons was that many of the would-be members of the church in Yaoundé knew Pastor Peter as an interpreter and not as a pastor. For this reason, they were not convinced that he was the right person to plant a church in the capital city.¹¹³ Furthermore, some of the more educated pastors of the church in Cameroon felt that they would have been more appropriate for the job in Yaoundé than a young pastor who did not have a degree from the university as they did. The latter had therefore given the impression to some of their contacts in Yaoundé that Pastor Peter was not fit for the job. For these reasons, some Cameroonian members and leaders of the church in Cameroon reported to the mother church in Nigeria that Pastor Peter had been sent to Yaoundé to open a church for Pastor Courage and not in the name of Winners' Chapel. As evidence, they suggested that the church's bank account in Yaoundé was in the name of Pastor Courage and not Winners' Chapel.¹¹⁴ That is how the Nigerian mother church came to ask Pastor Courage to close the Yaoundé church in December 2003. When Pastor Peter was instructed by Courage to close the church, he refused because he was sure that God had called him to accomplish a task in Yaoundé and that he was going to stay true to that calling especially because both the church and the bank account were in fact operating under the name of Winners' Chapel. Another reason why Pastor Peter refused to close the church was because, he claims that, two months

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Pastor Peter Signie, Interview (02/02/16), Douala.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

after the establishment of the church, he broke a record in terms of growth and finances and attracted a congratulatory message from the regional headquarters of the church in Kinshasa. According to Peter, the Yaoundé Winners' Chapel was the fastest growing congregation of Winners' Chapel since inception.¹¹⁵ That is why, despite such resentment, the church exploded to great heights to the surprise of many people. According to Peter, appeal was made to the biblical text and just as happened with the first disciples of Jesus, God confirmed his word with signs and wonders. As it is written, 'Then the disciples went and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by signs that accompanied it'.¹¹⁶ The church in Yaoundé started on 28 November 2003 in a rented building at Mballa II near the national Cameroon Radio Television Station.¹¹⁷ There were three members in attendance. The next Sunday there were four members. One year after the establishment of the church in Yaoundé the numbers had increased to 85 and by November 2004 the total membership of the church was 150.¹¹⁸ That is how the church picked up and later exploded. However, and according to Pastor Peter, the Yaoundé church had a different foundation. He claims that he understood what Cameroonians needed and he blended this with the gospel perfectly well. For example, he realised that Cameroonians need to see pastors who express love and compassion toward them. 'When you love a Cameroonian unconditionally and not because he/she gives you anything or because the one loves you, and when you appreciate the little things that they do and correct them compassionately without quarrelling or shouting they will go anywhere for you'.¹¹⁹ Another important aspect that in Pastor Peter's view may have attracted members to the church was that the

¹¹⁵ Pastor Peter Signie, Interview, Douala.

¹¹⁶ Mark 16:20.

¹¹⁷ Pastor Peter Signie, Interview, Douala.

¹¹⁸ Pastor Peter Signie, Interview, Douala.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

Christians were never really taxed for anything. Whenever a project was announced people were asked to give freely depending on how they felt God had blessed them. It was a spontaneous activity and the result was that people gave money to the church out of their free will and gave without counting the cost.¹²⁰ In less than three years, the church in Yaoundé could boast of a constant sum of two million francs in their account after local expenditures and remittances of more than three million francs to the national headquarters in Douala for onward transmission to Nigeria.¹²¹ This statistic and revelation cleared pastor Courage and Peter of all previous allegations of trying to run their own independent church in the name of Winners' Chapel. All financial and other records that were sent from Yaoundé to Douala and then to Nigeria bore the name, Winners' Chapel. Pastor Peter was later transferred from Yaoundé to Bamenda as an assistant pastor in 2005 and was replaced by Pastor Eboa Kum, another Cameroonian in the same year.¹²² By 2015, the Yaoundé headquarters church at Nfouda had approximately 3000 members.¹²³ A Congolese missionary from the Democratic Republic of Congo was the main pastor after successive Nigerian missionaries.¹²⁴

The most common strategy used by Winners' Chapel to create new church branches in Cameroon is as follows. First, a potential city for the site of a church is identified alongside any members of Winners' Chapel living there. Handbills are printed out with the name of the location carrying important messages that define the philosophy of the church such as success, wealth and healing. The handbills that usually carry a date for a supposed church conference are sent to the city for the members to distribute to the public inviting them to a conference on a particular date

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Pastor Eboa Kum, Interview (02/02/16), Douala.

¹²³ Elder Samuel Dah, Interview (27/01/16), Yaoundé.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

as organised by the national headquarters in Douala. On the day of the conference, the national church hierarchy delivers preaching and teaching of basic principles about Winners' Chapel and people are asked to give their lives to Christ. The new recruits are then divided into small groups and encouraged to meet at least twice a week. The last stage involves the posting of a pastor by church authorities in Douala to start the church by bringing together the different groups in a rented venue. The Douala national headquarters initially pays the rents for the new church but, at a later stage, the local church needs to pay their rents, pay the pastor's salary and send back remittances to Douala. Failure to produce sufficient funds to manage the local assembly and remit a quarter to Douala may lead to the closing down of the local church for failing to be productive.¹²⁵

When Afe Adogame, citing Clifford Hill, compared the abortive struggle of British church leaders to rally support toward maintaining traditional Christianity with the quiet revolution taking place amongst black Christians in Great Britain, he was situating the emergence of African transnational APCCs against the demise of traditional Christianity in Britain.¹²⁶ Adogame used the example of the Celestial Churches of God in Europe to show how Pentecostal movements not only transnationalise into new host territories but also proliferate within nation-states.¹²⁷ This thesis uncovers a similar story in relation to the expansion into Cameroon of the Winners' Chapel but shows how different the situation in Cameroon may be from Britain in terms of whether or not Christianity is growing. Adogame's observation concerning the demise of traditional Christianity in Great Britain in contrast to the growth of Pentecostal movements may not be true for Cameroon where traditional

¹²⁵ Pastor Peter Signie, Interview, Douala, 02/02/16.

¹²⁶ Afe Adogame, 'A Home away from Home: The Proliferation of the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) in Diaspora-Europe', *Exchange* 27, no. 2 (1998): 141-160.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

Christianity is still growing. But his argument about the proliferation of transnational movements in new nation-states holds sway for Winners' Chapel in Cameroon and other APCCs elsewhere. Thus, another APCC spreading across Africa is the Nigerian RCCG. The church also expanded from Nigeria into Cameroon in the late 1990s.¹²⁸ It has also spread to all ten regions of Cameroon.

The emergence of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon seems to have been both pre-planned and circumstantial. Pre-planned because the two missionaries who were sent from Nigeria arrived in the country as expatriates for a Nigerian-founded church with carefully designed plans for how they were going to accomplish their mission in what could be termed a new mission field (Cameroon). It was part of the church's strategy to invade Africa with the faith gospel through teaching and empowering Cameroonians to change and transform their existing churches and influence the wider Cameroonian society without any intention of planting Winners' Chapel churches in the country. However, this study has revealed that two things might have led to the emergence of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon: The first is that those who attended the Bible School became so interested in Winners' Chapel teachings and wished that the Bible School were transformed into a full church. Secondly, these members were stigmatised by their original churches for attending the Bible School and felt that they were no longer welcomed there. These two issues may have triggered the idea of developing the Bible School into a church. In this scheme of things, one might argue that the beginning of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon was not intentional but rather circumstantial through the expertise of the missionaries. However, it is highly possible that the initial claim not to open congregations was only a tactical move by the missionaries in order to gain access into existing

¹²⁸ Ojo, 'Transnational Religious Networks', 170.

congregations in Cameroon from where they hoped to gain an initial following. The evidence is in a claim that had been espoused by Bishop Oyedepo a few years before the missionaries left Nigeria for Cameroon. Oyedepo had claimed that:

One early morning... God showed me something else from Luke chapter 1: For as much as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also... Luke 1:1-3. God was telling me, 'there are many churches, yes; but I am giving you a portion of the church ministry'. I also... became the marching order for our Church Ministry. That is 'others have written it, but you have a part of it to write'.¹²⁹

The preceding quotation from Oyedepo is rather like an epigram, which seems to contradict his earlier claim (stated in this chapter) that he saw his mission as one which would revive existing churches rather than open new ones. It also suggests that God had now delivered another assignment to the Bishop to engender the writing of his own part of the story of Christianity, which Oyedepo understood as a divine command to open churches. He had received this revelation in 1982 and the missionaries went to Cameroon in 1996, fourteen years after the supposed revelation. One would imagine that, based on this new revelation, the missionaries might have known that their journey to Cameroon was to open churches and not just provide Bible training. However, the evidence suggests that they may have concealed their real intentions in order to gain access to the existing churches and then get their initial members from there. Might this be a common strategy that Winners' Chapel uses in its missions and evangelistic ambitions to spread in new territories? In 2007, Selome Kuponu investigated the emergence of Winners' Chapel in Lagos and discovered that the church was born out of similar circumstances to the one in Cameroon. Oyedepo had begun a monthly breakthrough seminar at Ikeja Airport

¹²⁹ Oyedepo, *The Mandate*, 21.

Hotel in Lagos and enjoyed the support of his counterpart Pentecostal fellow leaders who had encouraged their members to attend Oyedepo's seminars. By the time these members were influenced by the teachings of the word of faith and prosperity, they began to clamour for a church to be born. To the astonishment of his colleagues to whom he had earlier denied ever nursing the ambition of wanting to establish a church in Lagos, Oyedepo suddenly announced the assemblage of a special anointing service to be held at another venue-New Era Road, Iyana-Lagos, where the Winners' Chapel in Lagos was born in 1998.¹³⁰ The evidence for a strategy by Winners' Chapel that uses Bible training in order to penetrate new areas and win initial members from existing churches seems compelling.

Collaborating with existing churches particularly in Cameroon proved to be a good method for the missionaries to introduce themselves in a new context and get the initial following that was needed for the establishment of the church. Only in this way would they be able to write their own story of Christianity as it is happening; in this way, Winners' Chapel has fast become 'a global phenomenon'.¹³¹ During fieldwork, it was discovered that more than 90 per cent of respondents attending Winners' Chapel were members who had left other churches, both Pentecostal and historic mission churches. One of the key features of the church is to give the impression to people that they can realise their full potential in Winners' Chapel and that, whatever they have asked for and not received in other churches, Winners' Chapel is capable of fulfilling those needs.¹³² That is why the handbills often distributed to people during evangelism would carry messages such as, Jesus heals all diseases here, Jesus makes things work here, and Jesus answers all questions

¹³⁰ Kuponu, 'The Living Faith Church (Winners Chapel), Nigeria', 36.

¹³¹ David Oyedepo, *The Mandate*.

¹³² Pastor Dominic Nanje, Interview, Douala.

here.¹³³ Speakers for the church during such events usually give out the same message through microphones and loudspeakers. For example, on the morning of Saturday 22nd November 2014, I was involved in an evangelistic campaign with members of Winners' Chapel Bamenda. The crusade was aimed at advertising an event billed as 'Shiloh' 2014. The programme started with members of the church assembling at the church compound at about 8am where the evangelism leader gave instructions on how we were to go about distributing the handbills that had been printed out along the streets and market places and offices in Bamenda. The handbills had the theme of Shiloh 2014 dubbed 'Heaven on Earth' including the programme which showed that the event was to take place from 9 to 13 December 2014. Also conspicuous on the handbills was a picture of Bishop Oyedepo and his wife, Faith Oyedepo, which clearly signified who was in charge of the church and the programme. On arrival at the city centre, the more than 150 members were separated into groups of approximately 15 members and went to different locations. Some went to open market places, others to shops, workshops and bus travel agencies. Some of the members remained in the cars and drove round the city communicating the message that Winners' Chapel wanted to bring to their audience. They were inviting potential adherents to Shiloh 2014 which they claimed would be the place for people to experience heaven on earth. Part of the message that was communicated to the public through microphones and loudspeakers is revealing:

You are welcome to Winners' Chapel International Bamenda. Come and inherit your destiny, come and experience heaven here on earth. It is possible to enjoy heaven on earth and this is in one place, come December 9th to 13th 2014 at the Winners' Chapel. Why do you want to suffer and die with your problems? Come and be set free, is it sickness, poverty, broken marriages, bareness and joblessness, whatever problems you have got, come and see what we have already seen. Jesus is still alive and wants to solve all your

¹³³ *ibid.*

problems. Our church is located opposite Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School Bamenda. Come one, come all.¹³⁴

When I attended the church service on the next day, 23 November 40 new members came to the front of the church when the pastor invited all those who had come for their first time following the evangelistic outing the previous day. This signifies that the weekly evangelistic outreach and accompanying teachings of Winners' Chapel are important in winning new members to the church. Oyedepo claims that countless number of people have been made rich through his anointed teachings and diverse ministrations and that the proofs are undeniable.¹³⁵

One finds in these claims an affirmation of a man's calling by God to make the poor people of Africa materially rich. Oyedepo believes that he is fulfilling that mandate because, in his estimation, the African people are actually getting rich through his ministry and teachings. That is why Winners' Chapel popularises itself as having a mission that is designed to liberate the world from all forms of entrapments that dehumanise people, by using preaching of the word of faith. Julie and Wonsuk Ma have commented that PCCs predominantly perceive mission as soul-winning with respect to the general evangelical perception of mission, based on the North American Holiness Movement and closely linked to the eschatological urgency of the evangelisation of the whole world (Mathew 24:14). They argue that 'all other activities such as Bible school ministry, caring for children or relief work...are to contribute to evangelism and church planting'.¹³⁶ Julie and Wonsuk Ma's proposition hinges on the winning of souls of people who have not yet come to Christ. But in Winners' Chapel, soul winning does not necessarily mean winning those who have not come to Christ, but any persons including those who might be attending a church,

¹³⁴ Participant Observation Bamenda, October 2014.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Julie Ma and Wonsuk Ma, *Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Theology* (Oxford: Regnum 2010), 5.

but who in their understanding are still having some problems. The implication is that if everyone was a member of Winners' Chapel, there would be no more suffering, pain, disease and hardship in this world. Thus, Gifford reports how in every service in 2006, a pastor led everyone in confessing Oyedepo's pledge for the year, with congregation shouting 'Amen' after every item:

In 2006: Everything that shall make your laughter complete and total shall be added unto you. The desire of everyone's heart shall be delivered. Every trial shall be turned to testimonies. Every struggle shall be turned to miracles. Every form of bareness shall be turned to fruitfulness. Every frustration shall be turned to celebration. Every humiliation shall be turned into honour. Every shame shall be turned to glory. And every curse shall be turned into blessings.¹³⁷

Oyedepo's mandate and tactics seem to suggest that members of other churches are either lost in sin or unable to realise their full potential because of the lack of the appropriate word of faith. This may explain why he christened his Bible School as the Word of Faith Bible Institute. If indeed the establishment of Bible Schools in Pentecostal Charismatic Churches' missionary praxis is a strategy and springboard for the establishment of new churches, then Winners' Chapel has been successful in employing this strategy in Africa. The history of development of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon is therefore a function of the Mandate of Oyedepo to reach out to the African continent in a rescue mission. The AGIP under the World Mission Agency has facilitated the process and the teaching of courses that centre on prosperity, health and wealth has given impetus to the evolution of the church in Africa.

¹³⁷ Gifford, 'Trajectories in African Christianity', 283.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to investigate the emergence, growth, and proliferation dynamics of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. There are three major conclusions to be drawn from the chapter. The first is that the expansion of Winners' Chapel into Cameroon was part of a wider programme of missionary expansion into all of Africa. The second is that this programme of missionary expansion into Cameroon was directed from the Nigerian hierarchy in a top-down leadership perspective, and formed part of the personal vision of Oyedepo to conquer Africa for Christ. Thirdly, the evidence suggests that the programme was from the beginning conceived as one of church planting despite denials by the missionaries, who had claimed on their arrival that they were to run only Bible Schools. Overall, the prosperity preaching of the missionaries was well received by the Cameroonians and has facilitated the integration of Winners' Chapel into the Cameroonian religious mosaic.

Birgit Meyer has suggested that a trait of APCCs is their popularisation of the Prosperity Gospel and their strong global inclination. Their names, such as Winners' Chapel International or the Mountain of Fire and Miracle Church International, often refer to the church's aspired international outreach and highlight the intention of PCCs to develop and maintain international branches in other African countries. It also reveals their ambition to deploy notions of identity and belonging that extend beyond Africa.¹³⁸ If Birgit Meyer saw the inclinations of Pentecostal Charismatic Churches as negotiating global flows and notions of identity, Ogbu Kalu popularised the thesis that the re-evangelisation of Africa in the 1990s by Pentecostal Charismatic Churches was a fulfilment of God's revelations to the continent, which became a crucial ambition of the movement. For Kalu, 'the intensified pace of

¹³⁸ Meyer, 'Christianity in Africa', 453.

evangelisation reimagined the church as the presence, witness, representative, and foretaste of the Kingdom of God in communities'.¹³⁹ One could easily justify Oyedepo's mission and vision across Nigeria and into Cameroon and elsewhere in the light of Meyer's and Kalu's theses. But the power of Oyedepo to use his specific teachings on success and wealth to influence members of his church and so empower them to win even more members into the church in Nigeria and across the continent of Africa seems compelling. That may explain why, after establishing Winners' Chapel in Cameroon, Oyedepo may have been determined to deploy these notions of identity of the church across the boundaries, to consolidate, sustain and forge the values of the church in this new 'mission field' of Cameroon. If this is true, then it raises the question: what kinds of resources are being deployed from Nigeria by Oyedepo in order to consolidate and sustain the power and influence of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon? Moreover, what kinds of loyalty, contestations and resistance emerge from encounters between Nigerian imported values or personnel and Cameroonian indigenous realities/ workers of the church? These questions will be examined in the next chapter.

¹³⁹ Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 131.

CHAPTER FIVE

Intra-African Pentecostalism and the Dynamics of Power

5.1. Introduction

Several scholars have attempted to examine the construction and use of power within the African continent by often making their arguments from international relations theories and frameworks.¹ Recent studies suggest that Nigeria and South Africa are the two most powerful and influential countries in Africa because of their foreign policy aspirations, their material aptitude as well as their intellectual potentials.² At least seven concepts have been used to describe the influential capacities of these two nations in Africa including: middle power, emerging middle power, pivotal states, regional power, regional hegemon, secondary power, regional hegemonic power.³ But the multiplicity of concepts that are used to describe the influence of Nigeria and South Africa in Africa means that there is lack of consensus among scholars about which concept best describes the status of both countries in Africa. However, Olusola *et al* have used the concepts of soft power and regional hegemonic power to explain the influence of Nigeria in the continent. They argue that Nigeria's hegemonic status has often been advanced on the basis of its superior economic and comparatively advanced military capabilities within Africa. But they also cite the influence of the Nollywood film industry and the new mega-churches in the continent of Africa and elsewhere.⁴ Part of the argument is that some elite Nigerian pastors and televangelists have become internationally recognised because of their

¹ Olusola Ogunnubi and Christopher Isike, 'Regional hegemonic contention and the asymmetry of soft power: A comparative analysis of South Africa and Nigeria', *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 37, no. 1 (2015): 152.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid; Daniel Flesmes and T Wojczewski, *Contested Leadership in International Relations: Power Politics in South America, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa*, (Hamburg: German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Working Paper), 2010, No 121.

⁴ Ibid, 162.

miracle and healing working powers thus drawing attention toward Nigeria.⁵ What is helpful for this chapter in the preceding arguments is the use of the concepts of soft and hegemonic power to explain the prominence of Nigeria in the African continent both in the political and religious realms. Chapter 3 introduced the concept of soft power, as propounded by the Harvard scholar Joseph Nye. By soft power, Nye means the ability of the powerful to persuade others to follow their example or to want what they want, rather than coercing them.⁶ Coercion is synonymous with what scholars of international relations refer to as hard power. The concept of soft power is antonymous in meaning to hard power because it hinges on the capacity of a state to appropriate subtle and non-violent methods especially ‘through cultural influence to promote its national interests within the international arena in ways that concurrently reflect the interests of others’.⁷ This concept is helpful in the analysis I make in this chapter about the power dynamics of Winners’ Chapel in its transnational missionary praxis in Cameroon. By making use of this concept, I am placing my analysis within similar discourses in diplomacy and international relations which suggest that ‘soft power presumes that cultural capability and public diplomacy can be strategically calibrated with a state’s preference in the international arena in a non-violent manner’.⁸ Even though this study is not about whole nation-states but about an independent Pentecostal Charismatic Church and its intra-continental dynamics, the concept of soft power can be usefully applied in order to

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, (New York: USA Public Affairs), 2004.

⁷ Olusola Ogunnubi and Christopher Isike, ‘Regional hegemonic contention and the asymmetry of soft power: A comparative analysis of South Africa and Nigeria’, *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 37, no. 1 (2015): 152.

⁸ Olusola Ogunnubi and Isike, ‘An Analysis of Nigeria’s Soft Power Potential for Realizing its Hegemonic Aspirations in Africa’, submitted manuscript (to Africa Today), quoted in Ogunnubi and Isike, ‘Regional Hegemonic Contention and the Asymmetry of Soft Power’, 157.

understand the power mechanisms and cultural influence of Winners' Chapel in its operations in Cameroon.

This chapter has three main objectives. The first objective is to provide a critical analysis of the movement of Winners' Chapel missionaries into Cameroon and explore their ability to persuade Cameroonians into believing that they (the Nigerian missionaries) are indispensable in the mission of the church in Cameroon. The second objective is to trace evidence which reveals the intra-African power dynamics of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. This will be achieved by examining three practices of the church that are defined in Nigeria and implemented in Cameroon. The practices include; the use of Nigerian prepared sermons in Cameroon; the reproduction and use of Nigerian testimonies in Cameroon; and the use of electronic media across the continent. The third and final objective is to explicate the nexus between Nigerian Winners' Chapel missionaries/leaders and Cameroonian indigenous pastors in Cameroon in order to show how the one exercises power and control over the other and consequently alienates the latter in their home country.

5.2. Nigerian Missionaries' Incursions into Cameroon and the Politics of 'Soft Power'

Since the inception of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon in 1996, there has been the continuous movement of Nigerian missionaries into Cameroon as required by the international headquarters of the church in Nigeria. In addition to the National Pastor in Ndogbong who has always been a Nigerian, Nigerian missionaries also occupy the position of district heads in all the four districts that make up Winners' Chapel in Cameroon as shown in the previous chapter. These district headquarters include: Douala, Buea, Bamenda, and Yaoundé.⁹ The previous chapter also indicated that

⁹ Personal observations by the author and interviews with significant members and leaders of the Winners' Chapel in Cameroon.

there are currently about twenty Nigerian Winners' Chapel missionaries in Cameroon occupying the various leadership positions.

Nigerian missionaries are expected to spend two years in Cameroon after which they are replaced by other Nigerian missionaries.¹⁰ Winners' Chapel pastors and missionaries argue that this is an important missionary strategy, which is intended to keep the church vibrant and captivating toward the recruitment of new members. The rationale behind this given by some members and pastors of Winners' Chapel is that Nigerians have a better understanding of the Bible, are more spiritual and better preachers than their Cameroonian colleagues.¹¹ For these reasons, it is suggested that Cameroonians need to learn from the Nigerian missionaries before being able to run their churches independently in Cameroon. That is why a pastor of the church remarked to me that 'if Nigerian missionaries are coming to Cameroon, it is an opportunity for our own pastors to copy what they are doing, to try to understand from them how they 'caught the fire and to improve on their performances on the altar'.¹² Evidence suggests that Winners' Chapel members and most other Cameroonians are more strongly attracted to Nigerian Winners' Chapel missionaries or other Nigerian preachers who come into Cameroon, than to their Cameroonian pastors and brothers and sisters. As another Cameroonian Indigenous Winners' Chapel pastor complained:

Our ministries are hardly affirmed by our Cameroonian brothers and sisters. When a Cameroonian pastor goes up to the altar and shouts hallelujah the response is usually cold and lukewarm but if it is a Nigerian the shouts can bring down the ceiling. Cameroonians believe that Nigerians are the ones who can make miracles and that their own anointing is special.¹³

¹⁰ Pastor John Dominion, Personal Conversation (17/11/15) Douala. Real name of the respondent.

¹¹ Deaconess Clemantine Ning, Interview (19/11/15), Buea.

¹² Pastor Sako Emmanuel, Interview (19/11/15), Douala. Real name of the respondent.

¹³ Pastor Clement Mbambad, Interview (04/02/16), Buea. Real name of the respondent.

This claim may be further substantiated by a brief examination of the ways in which Cameroonians respond to invitations to attend evangelistic crusades that are organised by Cameroonians, on the one hand, and Nigerians, on the other, in Cameroon. For example, in 2010 a Cameroonian Pentecostal pastor who was at the initial stages of his own ministry, organised a crusade in Douala and only managed to attract about 45 people in an auditorium that was meant to accommodate over 1000 people.¹⁴ In October 2015, by comparison, Apostle Johnson Suleman, a foremost Nigerian Pentecostal/Charismatic prophet who owns and leads the Omega Fire Ministries, Nigeria, organised a crusade in Douala-Cameroon. The crusade took place at the Reunification stadium in Bepanda-Douala and over 60,000 people were in attendance, almost twice as many as the stadium should contain. Commentators agree that this is the highest ever recorded attendance in the stadium, which beats the record of a massive attendance of seventeen years ago when Cameroon hosted Ghana in a football match in that stadium.¹⁵ It is unfair to compare the popularity of a young Pentecostal pastor at the initial stages of his ministry with an older and more established international one from Nigeria in this way. However, other scholars have made the same argument about the popularity of Nigerian transnational Pentecostal pastors in Cameroon and their preference over Cameroonian pastors in Cameroon. The lesson therefore is that the Nigerian influence remains strong in Cameroon especially within Pentecostal/Charismatic religious circles and most Cameroonian respondents agreed to this view. It may well be that, as Nigerian transnational preachers display their miracles on television screens and organise crusades from time to time in Cameroon, Cameroonians have become more attracted to them and

¹⁴ Pastor Titus Ngah, Interview (13/11/15), Douala.

¹⁵ Elsy Ajei, Cameroon Post: 'Apostle Suleman Johnson's Crusade in Douala, One Killed and 20 others seriously injured', available at: <http://www.wilfredasuquo.com/2015/10/cameroon-news-apostle-suleman-johnsons.html>: (Accessed on 17/02/17).

their ideologies and patterns of ministry. In public diplomacy, a country may obtain its goals in world politics because other countries admire its values, wish to emulate its example and aspire to the latter's level of prosperity.¹⁶ For these reasons, powerful players find it necessary 'to set the agenda and attract others in world politics, and not only to force them to change through the threat or use of military or economic weapons'.¹⁷ This 'soft power', which gets others to crave the outcomes that powerful actors' desire, co-opts people rather than coerces them. Although the concept of 'soft power' here applies to issues of diplomacy among nation-states, it could appropriately be applied to discourses about transnational Pentecostalism where the transnational church consists of members of more than one country and where the originating country of the church may be quite influential. In this study, one may conjecture that the popularity of Nigerian Pentecostal transnational actors in Cameroon; their often overcrowded crusades; and the abundant display of instant miracles and testimonies of breakthrough from Nigeria on television screens in Cameroon may provide the 'soft power' of which Winners' Chapel is taking advantage in order to send their missionaries to manage the church in Cameroon. Once Cameroonians have become convinced that Nigerians are better than them in ministry and capable of providing the miracles that Cameroonians crave, Cameroonians will willingly give in to the Nigerian leadership. This explains why Winners' Chapel uses Nigerian missionaries to lead their church in Cameroon.¹⁸ According to one of my respondents, new members are being attracted to the church because of the different gifts that successive missionaries possess and employ as they replace one another. She maintains that: 'One pastor comes and puts the foundation,

¹⁶ Joseph Nye, 'Public Diplomacy and Soft Power', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, (2008): 94-5.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Pastor John Dominion, personal conversation in Douala, 2014, 2015 and 2016.

another one comes and puts the walls and another comes and puts the roof, I (respondent) mean spiritually. So there is a pastor who has the word, another brings the spirit of marriages, another brings the spirit of prosperity and so on'.¹⁹

What this respondent suggests is that each missionary from Nigeria brings his own gifts. Some may be good preachers, others good counsellors, others may be innovative in building up the congregation and others still may be good in performing miracles/signs and wonders, and other breakthroughs in life.²⁰ For example, the last two missionaries of the district headquarters in Bamenda had different gifts that brought great gains to the church. The previous one was a very good preacher and teacher but less concerned with the physical decorations and building up of the church while the current one has completely transformed the church into a masterpiece of artistic energy. He has changed the ceiling and painted the buildings, planted flowers toward decorating the entrance to the church and has also been a great miracle worker through whom many Christians have been greatly empowered and healed.²¹ The results of these is that there are now many members of the church who have been attracted there, both by the beauty of the church and its surroundings, and the signs and wonders that they have experienced in the hand of the current missionary. Some of the signs and wonders, which have been the hallmark of the new missionary, include miracle marriages, business career breakthroughs, success in exams, material and spiritual prosperity, and good health.²² The current membership of the Bamenda church is now about 800, compared to fewer than 300 members when the previous pastor was in charge, and there are now

¹⁹ Deaconess Philomena Ekum, Interview (10/01/16), Bamenda.

²⁰ Pastor Cyprian Kum, Interview (09/11/15), Douala.

²¹ Deaconess Philomena Ekum, Interview (10/01/16), Bamenda.

²² Signs and wonders here may refer to some of the achievements that members of the church believe they have attained as a result of their joining the church. Some of these would include marriage, healing, financial breakthroughs, business breakthroughs or other career breakthroughs.

two Sunday services each week to accommodate the growing numbers.²³ If indeed, Cameroonians have come to believe that Nigerian pastors or missionaries hold great potential for leadership and the provision of spiritual and other related needs of the church in Cameroon, then one may conclude that consciously/unconsciously, the concept of ‘soft power’ has worked well in the intra-African missionary work of Winners’ Chapel in Cameroon through the agenda that Oyedepo has set for his church. Nye was right when he argued that ‘the ability to establish preferences tends to be associated with intangible assets such as an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions, and policies that are seen as legitimate or having moral authority’.²⁴ According to this judgment, ‘if I can get you to want to do what I want, then I do not have to force you to do what you do not want’.²⁵ In this way Cameroonians willingly give in to the leadership of Nigerian missionaries.

Perhaps the most substantial reason for the presence of Nigerian missionaries in Cameroon as suggested by the respondents is to facilitate the realisation of the vision of the founder leader, Bishop Oyedepo and to mentor/train Cameroonian pastors who may not be versed with the vision and operation dynamics of the Nigerian-founded church and therefore might not be able to provide the necessary leadership in Cameroon.²⁶ Nigerian missionaries would also be preferable due to their natural association with Oyedepo, to provide the temporal power that is necessary to effectively transmit and sustain the spiritual power of Bishop Oyedepo from Nigeria to, and in Cameroon. Consider the claim of Pastor Victor Hill, former pastor/missionary of the Bonaberi branch of the Winners’ Chapel in Douala, from 2013 to 2016:

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Nye, ‘Public Diplomacy’, 95.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Pastor Peter Toh, Interview (12/10/15), Douala.

One of the things about our church leadership is that they are very interested in realising the vision, which God gave to God's servant Bishop Oyedepo to liberate the world from poverty and disease. That is one reason why missionaries are sent from Nigeria to different places all over the world and not only to Cameroon. Our church is also hierarchical and as you flow hierarchically in different functions, you perform your duties. For example, as a Zonal Pastor, the same duties that are expected of me here are the same duties that I would carry out in Nigeria, no difference. My essence of being here is because there are no indigenes that can fit into my hierarchy at this moment but I hope that very soon they too will come up into that level.²⁷

Hill's proposition reveals that Nigerian missionaries are stationed in Cameroon in order to facilitate the realisation of Bishop Oyedepo's supposedly God-given vision of stemming poverty and disease in the world. But one can also argue that the need effectively to transfer Oyedepo's spiritual and charismatic power to his adherents in Cameroon may be informing his decision to routinely use Nigerian missionaries in Cameroon because they are naturally linked to him and the Nigerian church. The missionary presence would thus, continuously remind Cameroonians of Oyedepo's leadership, influence and authority over the church in Cameroon. This trajectory would fit into Asonzeh Ukah's understanding of charismatisation as a process of stamping one's charisma as a strategy of leadership on members of a group.²⁸ Since Oyedepo cannot be present in all the places where he has established churches, he needs representatives who can carry his views and ideologies and maintain a temporal power to facilitate the transmission of his charismatic and spiritual power.

However, Pastor Hill's statement also suggests that there are currently no Cameroonians who can occupy the positions Nigerian missionaries are called to occupy because Cameroonians allegedly lack the required expertise to do so. An assistant pastor of Winners' Chapel in Bonaberi corroborates this claim and suggests that Nigerian missionaries are indispensable in instituting the tenets of Winners'

²⁷ Pastor Victor Hill, Interview (09/11/14), Douala.

²⁸ Ukah, 'Redeemed Christian Church of God', 104.

Chapel in Cameroon as directed by the church's founder and leader, Bishop Oyedepo.

Pastor Sako argues that:

What I think is happening now is that Nigerians are there so that Cameroonians who are aspiring to become pastors should be catching the fire.²⁹ Catching whatever makes Winners' Chapel to be vibrant because if you don't get it you will have a situation where you place pastors in churches who do not understand the vision of the church and they start doing funny things. So you get people who know what Winners' Chapel is, who know the core values of the church and who know how Winners' Chapel functions and who can easily dictate that this is Winners' Chapel tradition or not. I mean it is just inside you.³⁰

The suggestion that aspiring Cameroonian pastors of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon need to study under Nigerian missionaries in order to understand and institute the core values of the church might suggest that there are currently no trained Cameroonians with a good grasp of Winners' Chapel principles serving the church in Cameroon. The question that one needs to ask is whether for the past twenty years that the church has been negotiating religious space in Cameroon, Cameroonians have not been adequately trained to take control of the more established Winners' Chapel congregations that remain in the hands of the missionaries. In fact, evidence suggests that by 2002, when Winners' Chapel started spreading from Douala to other parts of Cameroon, there were at least three pastors who had trained in WOFBI in Nigeria and were serving in Cameroon: pastors Clement Mbambad, Ebuja Kum and Peter Siegnie.³¹ More Cameroonian pastors have trained in WOFBI, Cameroon and there are now over 117 resident pastors of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon.³² One former pastor of Winners' Chapel has therefore questioned whether during the

²⁹ 'Catching the fire' here refers to the fact that the Nigerian missionaries possess certain spiritual gifts which Cameroonians lack and therefore the latter needs to learn from the former.

³⁰ Pastor Sako, Interview (9/11/2015), Douala.

³¹ Pastors Ebuja Kum, Clement Mbambad and Piere Siegnie, Interviews (Various dates), Douala 2015/16.

³² World Mission Agency INC: Winners' Chapel International, Manpower Schedule, Document obtained by author in Douala, January 2016.

twenty years' existence of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon, the Cameroonian trained pastors have not been following the statutes of the church?³³ He also claims that Cameroonians train in the same school as Nigerians and points out that he was third on the list of those who were accepted in his batch in 2001 in terms of merit. He concludes by raising the question: 'you mean when we train in the same schools we don't qualify to hold the same positions; we don't qualify to enjoy the same social facilities'?³⁴ The evidence, therefore suggests that there are indeed some Cameroonian pastors who are capable of leading Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. But the carefully planned missionary strategy of Winners' Chapel Nigeria to station Nigerian missionaries in key leadership positions in Cameroon, despite the existence of qualified Cameroonians, points to another motive beyond that of simply training Cameroonians or the absence of qualified Cameroonians. The crucial motive may be that the founder and leader of the church prefers to use Nigerians to monitor the activities of his church elsewhere because he believes that his compatriots will be more loyal and accountable to him and can be relied upon to maintain and sustain the original mission and vision of the church. If that is true, then the likely conclusion is that Nigerian control is believed to be essential to the maintenance of the church's unique apostolic commission. Consider this observation from a former member of the church who now runs his own ministry:

It is very clear that even other enterprises from Europe have to report back to their original countries because they have to defend their interests and why the organisation was created in the first place. The Bishop knows these missionaries because they are mostly Yoruba people like him and he can easily trust them. That may be the reason why he sends them to Cameroon. But I think they are here on assignment and they have to respect their boss because they are working under a boss who is under God. So you see like I said this is not a Nigerian church but God's church. For quite some time now, I know that they are looking for a Cameroonian to head the church because

³³ Pastor Titus Ngah, Interview (02/02/16), Douala.

³⁴ Ibid.

for example, you see this matter of authorisation, we learned that it is like delaying because it is only Nigerians who are leading the church and then they are asking what might be the benefits that the nation gets from the establishment of the church in Cameroon.³⁵

The conceptualisation of Winners' Chapel missionaries' incursions into Cameroon as ambassadors who are sent to represent Bishop Oyedepo in foreign territories, and the comparison of this dynamic to the way other organisations in Europe function implies a deep sense of purpose and ambition by Oyedepo and his adherents. Ambassadors from Nigeria are trusted to be able to check and control Oyedepo's organisation abroad, implement the dicta of the church in Cameroon and maintain connections with the Nigerian international headquarters. The narrative also captures issues of trustworthiness or untrustworthiness, which suggests that the international leadership of the church in Nigeria are more inclined to trust Nigerian missionaries to implement the dicta of the church because of their natural connections to the church and its founder and leader. In comparison, non-Nigerians, or Cameroonians in this case, are of doubtful reliability because of their seeming status as 'outsiders' even in the latter's home country. This helps to explain why critics see Winners' Chapel in Cameroon as a completely Nigerian church without Cameroonian insights because it is led and governed by Nigerians in Cameroon and from Nigeria.³⁶ What is intriguing in these debates is the evidence of a very subtle agenda by the leadership of Winners' Chapel to use Nigerian missionaries to maintain the apostolic and spiritual power of Bishop Oyedepo and to facilitate the homogenisation of the church in its different spheres of influence in Cameroon or more widely across the globe.

³⁵ Pastor Elias Che, Interview (22/11/15), Douala.

³⁶ Pastor Victor Bong, Interview (02/02/2016), Douala.

5.3. Nigerian Missionaries and the Homogenisation of Winners' Chapel

In the previous section, this study suggested that the intra-African movement of Nigerian missionaries especially to Cameroon may not be unrelated to the fact that the Nigerian international leadership sees Nigerians as embodiments of the vision of Bishop Oyedepo with whom they share a common ethnic identity and affinity. Nigerian missionaries may similarly understand the implications of a mandate which emerged in their home context and is therefore best suited for use in the implementation of its demands elsewhere and, thus, produce a church that is homogenous in character and practice. Bishop Oyedepo may have been echoing this ambition when he arrogated a divine mandate to buttress the point. Oyedepo claims that:

Our church is not a man's idea but a divine mandate. It is neither seeking nor buying into opportunities but a divine command. This was unveiled in a vision on the 6th September 1983, at a prayer meeting with staff, where I saw a great house coming down from heaven and breaking into splinter houses as it hit the earth. This is why we do the same thing in all churches, why we have the same prophetic theme, the same teaching focus and the same global identity.³⁷

The 'Great House Vision' of Bishop Oyedepo arguably justifies his intra-African and global identity in light of the divine revelation that Oyedepo claims to have received in 1983. But it also significantly informs our insight into the reasons why the church needs to be homogenous all over the world: 'I saw a great house coming down from heaven and breaking into splinter houses... this is why we do the same thing in all churches...'³⁸ One senses within that trajectory a desire by the international leadership of Winners' Chapel to clone emerging Winners' Chapel churches that replicate the Nigerian mother church in order to produce a single Winners' Chapel

³⁷ David Oyedepo, *The Mandate*, 55.

³⁸ Ibid.

worldwide. The evidence for this homogenising goal seems to be in the ways in which practices of the church in Nigeria are exported to Cameroon for learning and implementation, as I hope to explicate later in this chapter. There can be no doubt that one of the objectives of the internship programme for enlisted pastors for deployment to foreign missions in Winners' Chapel is 'to practically acquire via observations, instructions and engagements the winning ways of Winners' resulting in the impartation of the virtues of the commission from senior ministers in established assemblies'.³⁹ Some of the virtues required by missionaries include true stewardship, accountability, integrity and loyalty. Bishop Oyedepo clearly spells out these virtues in the Mandate:

Missionaries must be instilled with the core values of true stewardship, open accountability, responsibility, integrity and loyalty as the intern is taken through documentation/record keeping and other administrative procedures such as church growth indices records, financial management, budgeting, monthly report preparation. Missionaries are also to learn 'true followership which is required for the fulfilment of any calling particularly to ministry'.⁴⁰

The preceding quotation enshrined in the mandate of Winners' Chapel reveals the seriousness with which Bishop Oyedepo views foreign missions. That is why he is determined to provide training to missionaries that would be helpful for the tasks abroad that may sometimes be uncongenial. Missionaries are therefore required to understand the church, maintain connections with the international headquarters in Nigeria and show complete loyalty to Oyedepo. Paul Gifford has helpfully noted that Nigerians usually occupy leadership positions in capital cities and they are usually well schooled in their founder's teachings, and are fiercely loyal. Nigerian leaders

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

also promote Oyedepo's books and the pilgrimage to the annual conference ('Shiloh') which takes place in 'Canaan land' in Lagos.⁴¹

There are at least three areas of practice in Winners' Chapel Cameroon in relation to Nigeria, in which the homogenisation of Winners' Chapel can be exemplified. These include: the use of ready-made sermons from Nigeria in Cameroon; the reproduction and use of Nigerian testimonies in Cameroon; and the appropriation of the media in their intra-African dynamics. We will examine each of these in turn.

5.3. 1. The Transmission and Use of Nigerian-Prepared Sermons in Cameroon

One of the most significant aspects of the missionary engagements of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon is the use of sermons that are written in Nigeria and sent to pastors for proclamation in Cameroon. Leaders and members of Winners' Chapel believe that each month Bishop Oyedepo receives a prophetic message from God which is used as a theme to develop sermons for that month and then sent out to all Winners' Chapel churches in the world via email.⁴² This practice is intended to provide the same teaching to all Winners' Chapel members throughout the world every week, month and throughout the year.⁴³ On Sunday 18th October 2015, I attended two services in two different Winners' Chapel congregations in Douala-Winners Chapel Ndogbong and Bonaberi, both led by Nigerian missionaries. Both congregations hold two church services each Sunday, the first being from 7-am to 9:00-am and the second from 9:30-am to 11:30-am. I attended the first service in Ndogbong and then the second service in Bonaberi. I was able to attend both services

⁴¹ Gifford, 'Trajectories in African Christianity', 288.

⁴² Pastor John Dominion, Personal Conversations (17/11/15), Douala.

⁴³ Ibid.

because the two congregations are approximately 10kms (6.2 miles) apart and require less than 30 minutes driving from one to the other. The church services I attended had as an additional item an ‘anointing service’ but both were following the theme ‘Covenant Day of Fruitfulness’. The sermon theme was ‘Understanding the covenant right to fruitfulness and a healthy lifestyle’. The presiding pastor of Ndogbong, John Dominion, suggested that fruitfulness and success are in our spiritual DNA and that this was capable of destroying every barren situation in the lives of those who believe. He then developed five points to show the meaning of fruitfulness. These points were: profitable, productive, constructive, useful and helpful. The sermon did not have a particular text but was rather a combination of biblical texts including Genesis 1:22, 26, 27; Proverbs 13:15; Isaiah 10:27; Mathew 5:13; and Psalm 113:9. After the sermon, the pastor made an altar call and 70 new members came forward to give their lives to Christ. These new Winners’ Chapel members were then introduced to the congregation and prayed for. During the anointing service that followed the altar call, members were asked to pour oil into their hands while the pastor prayed that every power of darkness be broken in their lives. After the prayer the members were asked to anoint themselves with the oil and declare whatever they wanted to be accomplished by God in their lives. When I moved to Bonaberi that same morning to take part in their second service, I found that the theme and sermon outline, including other aspects of the worship service, were precisely the same as I had observed in Ndogbong. The only difference was the way in which each of the two pastors articulated the sermon points, Pastor Dominion being more eloquent than Pastor Victor Hill. But the ambiance with which their interpreters interpreted the message from English to French was also different. Ndogbong has a more experienced team of interpreters than Bonaberi.⁴⁴ This might

⁴⁴ Winners’ Chapel congregations in Francophone Cameroon use translators who make sure that

be because the congregation in Ndogbong is the national headquarters in Cameroon where it is thought that most of the elite members of the congregation in Douala would attend church services.⁴⁵

The preparation and dissemination of sermons from Nigeria for consumption in other parts of the world within Winners' Chapel ensures that the ideas of Bishop Oyedepo are faithfully transmitted to his adherents and his authority and spiritual power felt even in places he has never visited. The practice also keeps in check any ideas that may be alien to Oyedepo's original intentions for the Winners' Chapel. This explains why Pastor Dominion commented that:

We are people under the authority of Bishop Oyedepo and that is how it must be. Disorderliness is created when there are too many opinions on the same matter. I grew up to learn that too many cooks spoil the pudding but at the same time that claim made me to query the issue of team work. But then it has also made me to know that any institution without a head is a hydra headed monster as Bishop Oyedepo often says. I have told you that you don't need to travel the whole of Cameroon in order to do your research, our church is one everywhere and I am here to make sure that it happens that way. As you have noticed each time you come here I am sitting on this table coordinating issues. I need to put in all the concentration in this world to achieve the goals that the Bishop has set for this commission.⁴⁶

What one learns from the preceding claim is that Oyedepo's power and influence over the Winners' Chapel in Cameroon is made possible by a sitting Nigerian missionary who fully recognises and endorses that power. To maintain and effectively transmit that power the ideas of Bishop Oyedepo needs to be fully implemented. That may explain why Bishop Oyedepo needs to receive a prophetic message every month before sermons are prepared and sent out to the rest of the world. Max Weber suggested that the successful establishment of religious

French-speaking Cameroonians attending church services are able to receive the message that is often proclaimed by the Pastors in English.

⁴⁵ Pastor Peter Toh, Interview (12/10/15), Douala.

⁴⁶ Pastor John Dominion, Personal Conversation (17/11/15), Douala.

movements depends on a process whereby either a prophet himself or his disciples secure the permanence of his preaching and congregation's distribution of grace.⁴⁷ It seems to be that Oyedepo's charisma revolves around these ideas of grace through his sermons to Cameroonians, which also legitimate his leadership and attract people to his church. However, some pastors lament the fact that there have been times when pastors have waited for the sermons from Nigeria until 5am in the morning because the Bishop received the prophetic declaration from God late, which consequently delayed the writing up and dissemination of the sermon.⁴⁸ Another problem is that in areas where internet access is inconsistent or absent, the churches suffer a great deal because they are unable to receive the sermons on time or even at all.⁴⁹

The practice of providing the same teaching to members of a particular denomination or church is not limited to Winners' Chapel. Other churches also show a desire to provide their members with the same instruction, which in fact gives a healthy balance and provides the opportunity for members of the church to easily identify themselves with one another following their common learning experiences. For example, the PCC uses a lectionary with prescribed texts for the preparation of sermons. However, it is expected that all Christians of the PCC receive the same message each week but in different ways, depending on the inspiration of the particular pastor and his/her ability to interpret the biblical text. The Church of Scotland also uses a lectionary for the preparation of sermons by individual ministers. What is different in Winners' Chapel is that detailed sermon outlines are produced

⁴⁷ Peter Blau, 'Critical Remarks on Weber's Theory of Authority', 307.

⁴⁸ Pastor Paul Menyole, Interview (04/02/16), Douala.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

and circulated and that the sermons exhibit a much greater thematic unity with the use of a variety of texts to substantiate the claims.⁵⁰

Bishop Oyedepo started the practice of preparing sermons in Nigeria for consumption elsewhere in 2001 after he had made redundant most of his pastors who lacked first degrees and replaced them with degree holders.⁵¹ Some of the degree holders who were employed with the church in Cameroon were pastors Ebuja Kum and Mbambad Clement who were then trained in the Church's Bible School for ministry. Critiques of this policy argue that going to Bible School does not mean that one has been called to ministry and that is why most of the degree holders in Winners' Chapel became an embarrassment to themselves and to the churches where they served because they could not preach well since they lacked the call. For this reason, Bishop Oyedepo decided that sermons would be prepared in Nigeria and sent out to pastors for proclamation.⁵² One of the disadvantages of this practice is that some pastors simply read out the sermons as they are sent to them from Nigeria and this has impeded a sense of creativity amongst some pastors of the church.⁵³ But if sermons are prepared in Nigeria and sent to Cameroon in order to maintain the prophetic declarations and unique spiritual power of Bishop Oyedepo and provide similar teaching to all Winners' Chapel members outside Nigeria, and if this policy facilitates the preaching assignments of pastors, what might be the reason for the importation and use of Nigerian testimonies in Cameroon?

⁵⁰ I have some recent (2016) copies of sermons that have been prepared in Nigeria and used in Cameroon for various services.

⁵¹ Pastor Victor Bong, Interview (02/02/16), Douala.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Pastor Job Molewe, Interview (18/01/16), Buea.

5.3.2. The Reproduction and Use of Nigerian Testimonies in Cameroon

A testimony is ‘a declaration, faith profession or public agreement and fundamentally an evidence given to God’s actions’.⁵⁴ APCCs are often enthusiastic in using testimonies as a means to showcase the workings of God in their communities and to attract new members. Asonzeh Ukah has used the example of Nigerian Pentecostal pastors to exemplify the importance and popularisation of testimonies. Ukah argues that Nigerian pastors show their ability to make miracles by publishing testimonies of healing in magazines, as audio recordings, handbills, and in videos’.⁵⁵ Some of the pastors demand that those who believe that they have been healed of their ailment must declare it publicly. Those who fail to testify are sometimes threatened with a more degenerate situation than was before.⁵⁶ It is noteworthy that Bishop Oyedepo has insisted that ‘whatever you are not able to say, you have not believed and consequently, you cannot possess’.⁵⁷ In other words, talking about being cured brings about the cure itself, because, ‘what you talk is what you possess’.⁵⁸ Bishop Oyedepo’s perceptions about the importance and use of testimonies can also be situated within an intra-African perspective where Nigerian Winners’ Chapel testimonies are used in Cameroon to validate claims of supernatural experiences and win members to the church.

The sharing of testimonies is a prominent feature during most activities of Winners’ Chapel in Cameroon. Members of the church share testimonies during

⁵⁴ J. D. Pluss, ‘Testimony’, in W. A. Dyrness, *et al* (eds.) *Global Dictionary of Theology*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 877-79.

⁵⁵ Asonzeh F-K Ukah, ‘Roadside Pentecostalism: Religious Advertising in Nigeria and the Marketing of Charisma’, *Critical Interventions* 2, no. 1-2 (2008): 125-141.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ David Oyedepo, *Understanding Financial Prosperity* (Lagos: Dominion Publishing, 1997), 285.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 291.

occasions such as - Sunday services, the Covenant Hour of Prayer,⁵⁹ Midweek Services for Holy Communion,⁶⁰ and Satellite Fellowship Meetings,⁶¹ on Saturday evenings. Two forms of testimonies can be observed in Winners' Chapel Cameroon: the first are testimonies that are shared orally by individual members of the church with the rest of the congregation during church services; and the second are testimonies that are read out from a sheet of paper by the pastor or an office bearer to the congregants.⁶² During fieldwork in different cities in Cameroon, I was intrigued when I discovered that the second category of testimonies concerned members in Nigeria whose testimonies had been reproduced for use in Cameroon. I was then to discover that such testimonies formed the majority of those that were printed on handbills in Cameroon and distributed to Cameroonians during evangelisation outreaches and other occasions.⁶³ For example, on 7th November 2015, I attended a Satellite Fellowship meeting in Bonaberi, Douala. During testimony time, two members gave testimonies. One was of healing from a long-standing backache by a young woman in her thirties, and the other by a young graduate in his twenties who had been employed in an electrical company in Douala.⁶⁴ After this, the leading elder took to the stage and intimated that we were going to study some testimonies as exemplars for us to copy: we would learn from the people, what they did and what happened to them or what they achieved as a result of their engagements.⁶⁵ Three different testimonies about Winners' Chapel members in Nigeria were read out from a sheet of paper. The testimonies suggested that the testifiers had been out of jobs for

⁵⁹ This is the name that Oyedepo recently gave to Morning Prayer sessions of his churches across the world. Church members are encouraged to go to church every morning from 6am to 7am in order to ask God for the things they wish to achieve that day.

⁶⁰ All Winners' Chapel congregations administer the sacrament of Holy Communion every Wednesday evening.

⁶¹ These are external units of the church where members of a particular area assemble every Saturday evening for prayers and testimonies.

⁶² Participant observation in various research sites in Cameroon, 2014-2016.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Participant observation, Douala.

⁶⁵ Elder Emmanuel Yele, Interview (07/11/15), Douala.

some time but after engaging in Kingdom Service in the church, they had eventually gained employment. After reading out the testimonies the following questions and answers concluded the lesson:

- What was the situation of the testifiers? Answer: They lacked jobs.
- What did they do? Answer: They sacrificed everything including their time.
- What did they hear and find? Answer: They were told to engage in Kingdom Service.
- What did they do? They engaged in Kingdom Service.
- What was the outcome? Answer: They had what they desired.

We may also consider this testimony from Nigeria found on a handbill advertising Shiloh⁶⁶ 2015 in Cameroon on the theme ‘From Glory to Glory’:

For 21 years, I suffered from sickle cell anaemia and was on medications. When I gained admission into Covenant University, I received my healing by faith and was off medication but sometimes I would fall sick and go home. Every Shiloh, my first prayer request was for God to change my genotype to ‘AA’. I almost lost hope but I continued to key in to the prophetic words from this altar. I was at the viewing centre during Shiloh 2013 because I couldn’t make it to Canaanland. I keyed into the testimonies of those whose genotypes changed to ‘AA’ and was sure that my testimony was on the way. Lo and behold, after one of the morning sessions at Shiloh 2013, I went for a test and the result was ‘AA’. I went back for a confirmation result, and was still ‘AA’. Since then, I have not taken any medication. Now, I am healed and healthy. I give God the glory (Testifier: Omolara, A).⁶⁷

The use of Nigerian testimonies in Cameroon might be thought to suggest that Cameroonians of Winners’ Chapel are not experiencing any miracles or breakthroughs of the same magnitude as those from Nigeria and may therefore lack testimonies. However, some members and pastors of Winners’ Chapel in Cameroon attest to the power of God in their lives that have led to great testimonies. For

⁶⁶ ‘Shiloh, the annual convocation of the Winners’ family is a prophetic annual appointment ordained for both the dominion of the church and the individual members of the Winners’ family. This holy convocation was flagged off by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost from the book of Joshua 18:1 which states: ‘And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them’.

⁶⁷ Supernatural Encounter Testimonies in Experience Supernatural Change @ Shiloh2015, December 8-12: From Glory to Glory. This is a Handbill, several copies of which are in the possession of the author. Collected in Douala during fieldwork.

example, one of the assistant pastors of the Bonaberi branch claims that he joined Winners' Chapel in 2006 after he was miraculously healed from a stomach ulcer. He had consulted medical practitioners to no avail and, while on prescribed medication, he encountered an old friend who introduced him to Winners' Chapel. Through prayers with the then resident pastor, he received his healing and has since not needed the medication that he was taking.⁶⁸ This testimony by a Cameroonian pastor of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon shows that Cameroonians have also been having supernatural experiences, which could well be appropriate for use in Cameroon. Why then are Nigerian testimonies used in Cameroon? One reason may be to encourage Cameroonians to commit themselves and donate money and other property to the church for their own good. The leader of the Satellite Fellowship mentioned above suggested that the Nigerian testifiers had surrendered everything they had before getting employment. This may mean that Cameroonians might need to make similar sacrifices, often referred to as seed-sowing in the Pentecostalist imagination and a prominent theme in Winners' Chapel discourse, in order to get a similar testimony. This is evident from another Nigerian testimony:

I joined this commission in 2011. During Shiloh 2014, the Holy Spirit told me to sow my house rent as my Shiloh sacrifice. That same day, a lady shared a similar testimony in church on how God blessed her because she gave her house rent as Shiloh sacrifice. Thereafter, my wife and I agreed to do same. On March 1, 2015, my boss appointed me to execute a project, though I lacked the required experience. However, by divine wisdom, I executed the project successfully. Prior to this time, I never knew there was a commission attached to the project until March 23. Meanwhile, my house rent was due on March 30. Behold, after the analysis of that project, the commission I got was overwhelming. Also, the tithes I paid was exactly the same amount as my house rent. Furthermore, the amount I have in my account is ten times greater than what I gave as Shiloh sacrifice. Indeed, God is not a robber.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Pastor Wanki, Interview (09/11/15), Douala.

⁶⁹ Faith Tabernacle, Canaanland, Ota, available at:

<http://faithtabernacle.org.ng/testimonies/supernatural-breakthrough-via-shiloh-sacrifice/>: (Accessed 22/11/16).

During fieldwork, I interviewed a member of Winners' Chapel in Yaoundé who had 'sown' his Mercedes car to the church as a 'Shiloh' sacrifice and was expecting a miracle.⁷⁰ He told me that the Holy Spirit had led him to sow his family car as a 'Shiloh' offering.⁷¹ Similarly, during an interview with the pastor of Tiko congregation, I was shown a group of houses owned by the church and now rented out, which a member of the church had 'sown' as 'Shiloh' offering.⁷² Bishop Oyedepo and pastors of his church encourage their adherents to participate in an altar of sacrifice as part of their yearly spiritual worship at 'Shiloh'. 'Where material sacrifices are involved such as landed properties, vehicles... including household wares such as furniture, freezers, electronic gadgets...' individuals concerned are expected to sell those items and pay the proceeds to the church in expectation of their desired supernatural turnarounds.⁷³ Winners' Chapel pastors in Cameroon suggest that during the one-week period of Shiloh events in Cameroon, all the proceeds in terms of money and property that are collected for the Shiloh sacrifice are sent to Nigeria because that is where the altar is and it is from there that the blessings proceed.⁷⁴ The evidence is in a revelation which was recounted by a respondent in Douala who claimed that, if not for his counsel, the church member who had 'sown' his Mercedes car to the church (earlier mentioned), would have left the church when he found out that the pastor of his congregation had been using the car instead of selling it and sending the money to Nigeria to generate the donor's blessings.⁷⁵ The direction of flow of material and monetary resources in intra-African Pentecostalism seems obvious. All the branches of Winners' Chapel are required to make sacrifices

⁷⁰ Elder Samuel Dah, Interview (27/01/16), Yaoundé.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Pastor Joseph Wah, Interview (18/01/16), Tiko.

⁷³ David Oyedepo, 'Processing Shiloh 2015 Shiloh Sacrifice', available at: <http://www.gospelepistle.com/2015/12/processing-shiloh-2015-sacrifice.html>: (Assessed 22/11/16).

⁷⁴ Elder Emmanuel Yele, Interview (07/11/15), Douala.

⁷⁵ Pastor Victor Bong, Interview (02/02/16), Douala.

to the Nigerian church and by implication to Oyedepo, who in turn delivers their blessings. Ron MacTavish has commented that ‘Prosperity churches have earned renown throughout the world for their ability to bring in prodigious amounts of money through tithes and special offerings’.⁷⁶ But one must not fail to notice that in exchange for the financial donations that are made to Oyedepo and his church in Nigeria are his particular spiritual blessings that proceed from the altar in ‘Canaanland’-Nigeria to his adherents in Cameroon and elsewhere.

The evidence suggests that the use of Nigerian testimonies in Cameroon may be designed to provoke the faith of Cameroonians to imitate what their brethren in Nigeria are doing so that they too can experience similar miracles. However, it also seems to be a clear strategy to derive material and especially financial benefits from Cameroonians that are used for the church’s developmental works in Nigeria. A considerable number of respondents revealed that Bishop Oyedepo is planning to build a 100,000 seating capacity church auditorium in Nigeria because the current 50,400 one is too small. Interestingly, Cameroonian pastors know that the National Pastor sends all tithes and ‘Shiloh’ offerings that are collected during the one-week period of the event back to Nigeria for use despite the fact that the church has very few permanent church structures in Cameroon.

The rather pragmatic approach of using Nigerian crafted testimonies in Cameroon seems to be in contrast to earlier precedents and even conventional paradigms, especially regarding the relationship between a testimony, the method of sharing, whether orally or written and the context where the testimony is shared. For example, Cecil Robeck suggested that, during the 1906 Azusa Street mission and revival, testimonies were an important part of congregational worship services and

⁷⁶ Ron MacTavish, ‘Pentecostal profits: The prosperity gospel in the global South’ (PhD diss., University of Lethbridge, Alberta 2014), 88.

contributed to the revival's momentum. 'In these testimonies, people shared with others their spiritual experience, thereby comforting and edifying one another'.⁷⁷ What Robeck suggests is that the reciprocal sharing of testimonies as personal narratives within faith communities may be effective ways of disseminating the message of salvation and hope. As Matviuk *et al* have suggested, when people are downcast because of prevailing circumstances, 'stories of salvation, healing, hope, and victory are powerful and compelling stories that open the path for living the life in expectation of the miraculous that is of what God will do for me, because I heard, you told us, what he has done for you'.⁷⁸ Listening to people who personally tell their stories of salvation gives the listener the possibility of verifying the circumstances in which the testifier's supernatural experience resulted. But the lack of open attestation by Nigerians whose testimonies are related in Cameroon is intriguing and appears to contradict Tony Richie's conception of testimony as a genre of speech, which involves open attestation or public acknowledgement and profession.⁷⁹ It also qualifies Walter Hollenweger's proposition that Pentecostalism is rooted in oral culture, rather than literary culture, and that oral culture is often shaped by narrativity.⁸⁰ But Winners' Chapel members in Cameroon are not ignorant about this caveat in the use of foreign testimonies even if their arguments are self-contradictory. For example, one of my respondents argued that:

In Winners' Chapel we are taught to always pray saying if God has done something good to a brother or sister, God can equally do it to me. Testimonies make God real, when you know the person testifying, you know what he/she went through, it would be easy for you to believe and then you

⁷⁷ Cecil M. Robeck, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 2-4.

⁷⁸ Marcela A. Chaván De Matviuk, 'Latin American Pentecostal Growth: Culture, Orality and the Power of Testimonies', *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 5, no. 2 (2002): 220.

⁷⁹ Tony Richie, 'Translating Pentecostal Testimony into Interreligious Dialogue', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 20, no. 1 (2011): 166.

⁸⁰ Walter Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 18.

do the same thing the one did and when you see the results another person will quote you in their prayers to God. For example, if you say that Abraham and Sarah went through the problem of barrenness people will argue that they were Bible people but when you see somebody who says he/she has gone through the same problem for 11 years and God has now given them a child then you don't need to fast and pray to believe the story. It is real and it builds up your faith and the faith of others.⁸¹

The intrinsic ambiguities in the conception and use of testimonies in Winners' Chapel Cameroon as related by my findings and respondent seem obvious. While the leader of the Satellite Fellowship uses Nigerian testimonies to teach Cameroonians about the function and power of testimonies to influence others, my respondent suggests that the credibility of a testimony may depend on the local availability of the testifier whose experience would be more obvious and open to scrutiny, and thus could more easily persuade and influence others around him/her. On the other hand, it could be argued that the use of Nigerian Winners' Chapel testimonies to teach Cameroonians appeals to their imagination because it gives the church a certain level of consistency throughout the world and shows that whether you are in Nigeria or Cameroon, a 'Winner is a Winner'. Therefore God who harkens to the cries of Nigerian Winners and supplies their needs can also do it for Cameroonian Winners if the latter copy what the former did before obtaining a miracle. This may explain why Cameroonians appear to regard Nigerian testimonies as more powerful than the Cameroonian ones and see no boundaries in their application in Cameroon. As another Cameroonian respondent suggested:

God is one, if miracles are happening in Nigeria, they can also happen in Cameroon and if things were not happening in Cameroon people would not have been joining the church. We have new members coming to our church every day because of the signs and wonders we are experiencing. But I strongly believe that Cameroonians need to hear about these testimonies from Nigeria because they are more powerful and capable of building up our faith in God. It is also important to maintain the link between Cameroonian

⁸¹ Comfort Sih, Interview (27/01/16), Yaoundé.

Winners' Chapel members in Cameroon and their brothers and sisters in Nigeria but most especially with 'Papa' who is the head of the church.⁸²

This perspective resonates with what André Corten refers to as one of three new religious needs of transnational Pentecostalism: 'A strong externalised emotion; a pursuit of the sacred through the representation of frightening powers; and fantasies of dramatic transformation'.⁸³ David Oyedepo has thus suggested that 'testimonies are faith boosters and that when one does not appreciate and consider testimonies, one's spiritual understanding is short-circuited and expectations are crippled'.⁸⁴ He further suggests that 'every testimony shared is capable of reproducing itself in other lives. It also helps to confirm the efficacy of God's word'.⁸⁵ Here we find that Oyedepo appeals not just to members of his church in Nigeria who believe in his leadership and power, but to everyone who identifies as a Winner, regardless of where they are. For as he claims, testimonies from elsewhere are capable of replicating themselves in other lives and for their salvation. This is reminiscent of Michael Foucault's 'pastoral power' where power implies knowledge of the conscience of those under pastoral power and an ability to direct it.⁸⁶

It is clear that Oyedepo considers Nigerian testimonies in Cameroon to be powerful enough to boost the faith of Cameroonians probably because the Cameroonian church is relatively young. But by suggesting that every testimony shared is capable of reproducing itself in another life, Oyedepo shows that testimonies from any Winners' Chapel congregation are capable of influencing members of the church elsewhere. In this sense, the power is clearly in Nigeria from

⁸² Pastor Joseph Wah, Interview (18/01/16), Buea-Tiko.

⁸³ Corten and Marshall-Fratani, *Between Babel and Pentecost*, 110.

⁸⁴ Oyedepo, *The Mandate*, 65.

⁸⁵ David Oyedepo, 'The Power of Testimony', obtained from the Facebook page of David Oyedepo's Ministries International: 19/07/16.

⁸⁶ Foucault, *Power Essential Works*, 333.

where it radiates to Cameroon and other countries where the church has been established. This is true when one considers that Nigerian testimonies have been consistently used in Cameroon, yet the researcher is aware of no evidence to suggest that Cameroonian testimonies have been used in Nigeria. The use of Nigerian testimonies in Cameroon may exemplify the fact that distance is not a barrier to the common goals and practices of Winners' Chapel. It is even common to hear Pentecostals make statements such as 'there is no distance in the spiritual world, prayer and anointing collapses any distance'. This is even more evident in the ways in which media, especially electronic media, are used across the continent and beyond in order to influence members of the church.

5.3.3. Present in their Absence: How the Media Collapses intra-African Space

Another way in which the presence and practices of Winners' Chapel that are conceived in Nigeria, are transmitted to, and experienced in, Cameroon is through the media. Three main media practices are discernible in Winners' Chapel. The first are books that are written by Bishop Oyedepo, transported to Cameroon and sold in various book stores located in the church's premises. The second is electronic media through which connections are made between the mother church in Nigeria and the Cameroonian daughter church by broadcasting live transmissions of major events from Nigeria in Cameroon. The third one is within Cameroon and involves sermons that are preached especially by missionaries in the national headquarters, and district headquarters, and which are then recorded in DVDs and sold to church members or other adherents. A DVD costs 500 FRS, which is approximately 70 pence. The first two media practices will be examined in this study with particular emphasis on what I have called 'present in their absence', which explains how Cameroonians feel

during special events when they are connected to Winners' Chapel Nigeria through electronic media.

Bishop Oyedepo has published more than 70 books,⁸⁷ mostly on the subjects of success and prosperity, and members of Winners' Chapel are required to read at least one book each month for their edification.⁸⁸ Oyedepo's theology is the conventional prosperity gospel, which insists that the Bible is a contemporary document and the blessings which God bestowed on Abraham and made him wealthy are equally appropriate for Christians today.⁸⁹ Some members of the church claim that they joined the church after reading some of Oyedepo's books. For example, Yvette was introduced to the Winners' Chapel in Yaoundé in 2010 by reading the book entitled *Success Buttons*.⁹⁰ A friend who attended Winners' Chapel in Yaoundé had given her the book.⁹¹ According to Yvette, the book was so well written with biblical illustrations and was also encouraging to her because she was a student of the University of Yaoundé at the time. She understood from the book that success was her birth right as a Christian and from it she also learned the way to success, which is prescribed in the Bible and adequately explicated by Oyedepo in the book. After reading the book, Yvette decided to attend Winners' Chapel church service and there discovered that the undiluted word of God was being preached. She then decided to join the church.⁹² Other respondents revealed that reading Oyedepo's books such as *Born to Win*⁹³ and *Making Maximum Impact*⁹⁴ had given them a sense of connectivity to Bishop Oyedepo both in his teachings and the blessings that come

⁸⁷ See <http://www.paperbackswap.com/David-Oyedepo/author>: (Accessed 17/11/16).

⁸⁸ Several interviews with Elders, Deacons, Deaconesses and Members of the Winners' Chapel in Cameroon, 2014-2016.

⁸⁹ David Oyedepo, *Winning the War Against Poverty* (Lagos: Dominion Publishing House), 2006, 30

⁹⁰ David Oyedepo, *Success Buttons* (Lagos: Dominion Publishing, 2005).

⁹¹ Deaconess Yvette, Interview (27/01/16), Yaoundé.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ David Oyedepo, *Born to Win* (Lagos: Dominion Publishing, 1986).

⁹⁴ David Oyedepo, *Making Maximum Impact* (Lagos: Dominion Publishing, 2000).

with being a member of his church. These teachings are mainly centred on good health, prosperity, wealth and success.⁹⁵ The teachings of Bishop Oyedepo are sometimes popularised on stickers or handbills that are used for evangelisation purposes of the church with short assertive phrases, which encapsulate the philosophy and intention of the church. Examples include, 'I am a Winner', 'Winners' Family', 'Am Above and Not Beneath', 'Over Comers', and 'More Than Conquerors'.⁹⁶ These slogans suggest the literal reality of what Winners' Chapel members are to be in their lives- a people who are victorious in all aspects of life in this life and void of problems. Paul Gifford has therefore concluded that Oyedepo's Christianity is about nothing else but victory, triumph, blessing, and dominion.⁹⁷ Oyedepo himself insists that a Christian should be 'gloriously distinguished in all spheres of life'.⁹⁸ Most believers of Winners' Chapel adhere to Oyedepo's view of worldly reward which suggests that, once a born-again Christian, one can access the mind of God through the Bible and other recommended media materials of Oyedepo in order to overcome poverty and sickness.⁹⁹

The influence of Bishop Oyedepo and Winners' Chapel in Cameroon is not only through his books, handbills and stickers, which sell the image of the church and reveal its philosophy. One of his major strategies to keep members of his church and attract their loyalty to him is through the electronic media. Members of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon believe that through electronic media they actually connect with Bishop Oyedepo and benefit from whatever blessings he espouses, in much the same way as those physically present in Nigeria. According to the Media Manager of

⁹⁵ Several conversations and interviews in Douala, Bamenda, Buea and Douala with significant members and leaders of the Winners Chapel in Cameroon, 2014-2016

⁹⁶ Kuponu, 'The Living Faith Church (Winners' Chapel), Nigeria', 174.

⁹⁷ Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*, 30.

⁹⁸ David Oyedepo, *Signs and Wonders Today: A Catalogue of the Amazing Acts of God Among Men* (Lagos: Dominion, 2006), 14.

⁹⁹ Kuponu, 'The Living Faith Church (Winners' Chapel), Nigeria', 174.

Winners' Chapel Bonaberi, all the district headquarters of the church in Cameroon have installed satellite dishes through which live transmissions from Faith Tabernacle¹⁰⁰ in Nigeria are received. The busiest period when electronic media is used is during the yearly 'Shiloh' that is commemorated every December. A mass publicity campaign alerting the church members and the public to the forthcoming live broadcast of the events in Cameroon and the accompanying blessings from Bishop Oyedepo usually precedes the event. Church members are encouraged to connect spiritually to the church and to the Bishop in Nigeria through prayer so as to be fully involved in the events in Nigeria by watching them from Cameroon.¹⁰¹ By spiritually connecting to Nigeria through the satellite images in this way, it seems that Cameroonian Winners' Chapel members believe that they are spiritually present in Nigeria even though physically absent. Thus one interviewee commented that 'though you are not physically present in Nigeria, you are there through prayer and expectation so that what people are experiencing in Nigeria, you can also experience in Cameroon and the same is true of all the viewing centres of the world'.¹⁰² During special occasions that are often presided over by the Bishop, the satellite dishes in Cameroon are turned toward Faith Tabernacle. These pick up signals and are connected to sound and video systems and are broadcast to televisions screens installed in the representative viewing centres of the event in Cameroon.¹⁰³ This way, members of the church in Cameroon can participate in all the activities as directed

¹⁰⁰ Faith Tabernacle is the name that is given to Bishop Oyedepo's 540,000 seating capacity church auditorium in Nigeria. It is the international headquarters of the Winners Chapel where the Bishop resides.

¹⁰¹ Pandora Wung, Interview (18/11/15), Buea.

¹⁰² Helen Mbong, Interview (18/11/15), Buea.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

from Canaanland-Nigeria including prayers, singing in English and Yoruba, and other practices as applicable.¹⁰⁴

On 7th November 2014, I attended an All-Night Prayer session in Bonaberi, which was dubbed ‘One Night with the King’ and broadcast live from Nigeria through satellite images. Bishop Oyedepo was in charge. Apart from prayers, singing, preaching and testimonies which characterised the programme, the high point of the night was what Bishop Oyedepo called the ‘Blood of Sprinkling’. In a message that would lead to administration of this rite, Oyedepo spoke about ‘unveiling the wonders of the blood of sprinkling’. He suggested that we live in a Kingdom that operates on mysteries and that one of the mysteries handed down to Winners’ Chapel by its divine mandate or commission was the blood of sprinkling. According to the Bishop he did not read this mystery in any book but it was handed down to him by direct revelation from Jesus Christ. He then suggested that we were going to see the raw manifestation of the efficacy of the blood of sprinkling during the service. His previous example of the efficacy of the blood of sprinkling was of an old woman in the Maiduguri branch of the church in Nigeria who had no blood in her left hand, for some reason, and because of this the hand had turned white. But after the blood of sprinkling on the hand during a ‘One Night with the King’ service, blood immediately returned to the hand and the woman received her healing. Oyedepo then quoted several scriptural passages including Hebrews 9:19-21, Hebrews 12:22-24 and 1 Corinthians 5:7, possibly to support the practice of the blood of sprinkling. We were then reminded that, as we received the blood of sprinkling, many changes would take place in our lives: ‘that growth dissolves instantly, that discomfort is gone, barrenness is gone, business stagnation is gone, infertility is gone’, and most

¹⁰⁴ Participant observation by author in Bamenda and Douala, 2014 and 2016 respectively.

especially we were promised by the Bishop exemption from death itself. Oyedepo even claimed that we would be transformed into divine beings after the sprinkling or become divinised so that demonised people will bow when they saw us. He then blessed the red coloured liquid that was placed on a table in front of the church in small buckets, much the same as it was in the church I was attending in Douala. In order to stress the breadth and length of his audience and the extent of his power, Oyedepo prayed like this: ‘All the contents on the altars of God all over the world are declared as the Passover blood of the lamb and whatever the Passover delivered in Egypt, shall be re-enacted in your lives wherever you are. Everyone connected to this prophetic ministry, as the blood touches you tonight, every mark of the wicked drops off you, everything resisting your fruitfulness drops off you’. After every declaration, the Amen was loud enough to shake the foundations of the church building. A group of ushers then took up the buckets of red coloured water and started sprinkling on those who were in attendance in the church in Nigeria. Our ushers did the same in the Bonaberi church. After the sprinkling of the blood six minutes were allocated by the Bishop for instant testimonies both in Canaan Land-Nigeria and in all the viewing centres of the world.¹⁰⁵ There is no doubt then that the narrative here about the transnational transmission of spiritual and charismatic power is not simply one of Nigeria dominating its smaller neighbour, Cameroon, but of a global network of transmission of spiritual power from Oyedepo to his adherents worldwide. In Faith Tabernacle, the first miracle was read out by one of the ushers who related that a woman who had lost two previous pregnancies had been to the hospital the day before ‘Shiloh’ and had been told by the medical doctors that the third pregnancy she was carrying was abortive. The child had already died and was no longer breathing.

¹⁰⁵ As we watched the events of ‘Shiloh’ in Nigeria from Cameroon, we were also shown other viewing centres intermittently. These included branches of the Winners’ Chapel in other African countries but especially in Europe, the United States, Asia and Latin America.

The usher reported that, after the blood of sprinkling in that service, the baby started kicking instantly and was alive again. In our viewing centre in Cameroon, at least three testimonies of instant healing were related: the first was about a sharp pain in the neck of a young lady, which had disappeared, the second was of two months' abdominal pain that had gone, and the last was of severe headache that had disappeared after the sprinkling. One week after the event, I spoke to one of the church members about the service of sprinkling and tried to find out whether extraordinary miracles such as the one related from Nigeria in which a dead child had been brought back to life in the womb of a mother, were also experienced in Cameroon.¹⁰⁶ My respondent spoke of miracle marriages and jobs but his most striking example was the story of a woman in Kenya who had been cured of a swollen leg during another occasion of One Night with the King, which involved feet washing. The lady had followed the programme online while in Kenya and from the instructions of the Bishop had dipped her swollen-cancerous legs in a bucket of water and gone to sleep. When she woke up the next morning, the water had turned white and her disease had gone.¹⁰⁷ I suspect that this testimony had possibly been related to my respondent during a church service, consistent with the practice of using testimonies from Nigeria or elsewhere in Cameroon.

One of the reasons why electronic media are popularised in Winners' Chapel especially during occasions such as 'Shiloh' is because the church understands that many Winners may not be able to pay the transport costs involved in travelling to Canaanland-Nigeria and back during Shiloh.¹⁰⁸ Given the importance of the event that members believe to be a special moment when God uses the Bishop to deliver

¹⁰⁶ Deaconess Denicia Kolo, Interview, (10/01/16), Bamenda.

¹⁰⁷ Deacon Titus Ngah, Interview (13/11/15), Douala.

¹⁰⁸ Pastor Cyprain Kum, Interview (09/11/15), Douala.

people's destiny into their hands,¹⁰⁹ the most appropriate way to be connected to the Bishop is through satellite images transmitted from Nigeria.¹¹⁰ However, Winners' Chapel members and pastors also understand that the representation and presence of Bishop Oyedepo in different parts of the world through media is in tandem with a divine revelation, which Oyedepo claims to have received from God. In the revelation, God informed Oyedepo that there would come a time when he will stand in one place and speak and people around the world will be seeing and even feeling him.¹¹¹

The interconnectedness between Nigeria and Cameroon or between Bishop Oyedepo and his followers in Cameroon and elsewhere through electronic media is most certainly suited to the ambition of the Bishop to link his churches and members together regardless of the distances that separate them and to effectively transmit his spiritual power. As Cameroonians watch the events in 'Canaan Land' on the screen they feel tangibly connected to the church in Nigeria and to the Bishop.¹¹² The excitement in singing alongside their fellow brethren in Nigeria and the commitment to Bishop Oyedepo in order to benefit from his blessings, without physically visiting Nigeria, profiles media appropriation in APCCs in new and amazing ways.

Winners' Chapel is not the only APCC that appropriates media in these ways. Others include the RCCG led by Pastor Enoch Adeboye and the Synagogue Church of all Nations founded and led by Prophet T.B Joshua. In Cameroon, T.B Joshua's Emmanuel TV is arguably the most popular and it could be rightly argued that most Cameroonian Christian households watch Emmanuel TV because of the huge display of instant healing miracles and supernatural experiences on their screens. But what

¹⁰⁹ Pastor Silas Yong, Interview (08/11/14), Douala.

¹¹⁰ Titus Ngah, Interview (13/11/15), Douala.

¹¹¹ Deaconess Mercy Wah, Interview (17/11/14), Douala.

¹¹² Deaconess Josephine, Interview (18/01/16), Buea-Tiko.

distinguishes the media practice of Winners' Chapel from that of TB Joshua's Emmanuel TV, for example, is the fact that, in the latter, viewers are sometimes asked by Prophet T.B. Joshua to place their hands on the screen during prayers. In this way, the Prophet suggests his viewers can be connected to him and the prayers from Nigeria, and will receive healing. But Winners' Chapel members describe this practice as a lack of faith as another respondent revealed in the following statement:

Doctrinal matters differ per church. For example, one of the pillars of Winners' Chapel is faith and with faith you connect to God. You must not necessarily go to touch something because we believe according to scripture that touching is even an extension of lack of faith. You can sit where you are and benefit from what is happening in Nigeria just by viewing what is happening in Faith Tabernacle. That is faith, and expecting results in Cameroon just like those who are physically present in Nigeria is already faith. So that is faith.¹¹³

My respondent reckons that touching is a lack of faith and believes that viewing is an extension of faith. But whether television screens are touched by viewers or simply watched, what is clear in these practices is the way in which Cameroonians have come to regard Nigerian men of God as having a high degree of spirituality, which makes the latter capable of transmitting some healing and other blessings to their viewers through television screens and other means. But this significantly shows how media can change people's perceptions about religion and God and how Pentecostal/Charismatic leaders can use electronic media to influence the religious lives of their adherents across international boundaries.

When Marleen De Witte reflected on the process of making, broadcasting and watching the *Living Word* programme of the International Central Gospel Church Ghana, she showed that the format of televisualisation of religious practice creates charisma, informs ways of perception, and produces new kinds of religious

¹¹³ Titus Ngah, Interview (13/11/15), Douala.

subjectivity and spiritual experience.¹¹⁴ What De Witt shows is the relationship between religion, charisma, the media and loyalty. Oyedepo stands out as the charismatic personality of the Winners' Chapel *par excellence*, who is capable of transmitting his spiritual power, blessings and influence to other lands by the use of electronic media. By being able to engage his followers in this manner and keep their loyalty to him, Bishop Oyedepo fits into what Boas Shamir *et al* refer to as “the Motivational Effects of Charismatic Leadership”.¹¹⁵ They argue that charismatic leadership has its effects by strongly engaging followers' self-concepts in the interest of the mission articulated by the leader.¹¹⁶ Max Weber spoke of the charismatic leader's ability to ‘arouse task-relevant motivation by tapping followers' needs for esteem, power, and/or affiliation.’¹¹⁷ This is evident in Winners' Chapel Cameroon where the members have been made to believe that through the media they can actually be in the same space as their leader and receive his blessings for their enrichment. In media parlance, Birgit Meyer variously describes this evolution in Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity as ‘mediation and immediacy: Sensational forms, semiotic ideologies and the question of the medium’.¹¹⁸ Meyer argues that the media evoke or authorise sensations of spiritual powers as immediate and real; ‘media are prone to ‘disappear’ or become ‘hyper-apparent’ in the act of mediation’.¹¹⁹ These conceptions in the context of this study reveal how the electronic media collapse transnational space in such a way that Winners' Chapel

¹¹⁴ Marleen De Witte, ‘Altar Media's Living Word: Televised Charismatic Christianity in Ghana’, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, no. 2 (2003): 174.

¹¹⁵ Robert Boas Shamir, J. House, and Michael B. Arthur, ‘The motivational effects of Charismatic Leadership: A Self-Concept Based Theory’, *Organization Science* 4, no. 4 (1993): 577-594.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Weber, *Toward a Theory of Spiritual Leadership*, 693.

¹¹⁸ Birgit Meyer, ‘Mediation and Immediacy: Sensational Forms, Semiotic Ideologies and the Question of the Medium’, *Social Anthropology* 19, no. 1 (2011): 23-39.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

becomes a single sacral community under the Bishop irrespective of where people are located.

There are several other issues which emerge from my analysis of media appropriation in Winners' Chapel Cameroon. They point to the fluid nature of spiritual things, the identity constructs of the church, and the indispensability or personal aggrandisement of Bishop Oyedepo. There is also within the discourse a suggestion of lack of agency and independency on the part of the Cameroonian church members, or other church leaders in Cameroon and elsewhere. One of my respondents put these ideas into perspective:

There are two things here: The first one is that there is a language that goes on that there is no distance in the spirit world. And the second is about faith. Faith is projected to mean that it doesn't matter whether you are there or not personally but if you believe, 'and all things are possible to him that believe'. So those are the issues and I don't want to actually meddle with sensitive spiritual issues like that. I presume that it is working for them. I don't know but personally those were exercises we did, practices that continuously are being done in Winners Chapel. I think it is their identity; it is what keeps people in the church or fold. It is what makes the church to move on. It is what brings the temperature; it is what drives the momentum. But I think there are real problems with that. For example, if the Bishop is not there is there somebody who will take that position and who will have all this charisma he has got? Maybe the wife! The two children! And if these are not there ... there would be a problem. But this to me is an Empire even though it has to be a church where elders minister, elders are functional. It should be a church and not an Empire. You know I call it a divine triangle where you have one person at the top and the rest are at the bottom and they are actually maintaining this one man on top. You know you cannot actually take his place. But I think that the best way of doing ministry or church is a boulevard where everybody is growing, we are doing ministry together in a local church we are doing ministry together all moving toward serving the Lord. In 1Peter 5:1-3 you see the concept of a church where Peter is saying that let the elders actually partake of the leadership of the church.¹²⁰

Rosalind Hackett has sought to explore the reasons why Pentecostal Charismatic Churches privilege electronic media as suitable sites to transmit their teachings and

¹²⁰ Pastor Victor Bong, Interview (02/02/16), Douala.

build their empires.¹²¹ She argues that electronic media have significantly transformed the religious landscape by facilitating transnational and homogenising cultural flows and taking the ‘connections between these movements and the networks they create to new, global levels’.¹²² What Hackett referred to as the homogenisation of cultural flows may according to findings in this study be linked to some Yoruba cultural aspects, which observers believe are entering Cameroon through the church because Oyedepo who founded and leads the church is Yoruba. Two aspects of what respondents call ‘cultural infiltration’ are discernible from conversations with some leaders of the church in Cameroon. The first relates to the way Nigerians revere pastors as God’s servants in a very literal sense. According to this claim, the Yoruba actually regard pastors as demi-gods, which is similar to the Yoruba traditional worldview where kings are lifted up, and are unopposed when they speak. This tradition has infiltrated into Christianity in Nigeria and is now transported to Cameroon through the church and Winners’ Chapel missionaries who are promoting it as they try to maintain the temporal power of Oyedepo.¹²³ For example it is a common practice in Cameroon to hear Cameroonians refer to Nigerian missionaries as ‘Daddy’ and in addition are giving them unquestioned loyalty.¹²⁴ The missionary is the quintessential man of God, the one whose authority should not be questioned. J.D.Y. Peel who, more than any other scholar has studied the Yoruba religions has convincingly shown how Nigerian Pentecostalism experienced a shift in the 1980s from a holiness agenda to one concerned with

¹²¹ Hackett, ‘Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation of Media Technologies...’, 258.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Pastor Victor Bong, Interview (02/02/16), Douala.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

combating evil in the world—a shift that Peel sees as a reversion to Yoruba traditional religious culture.¹²⁵

The second aspect of cultural infiltration concerns the songs and music that are used in Winners' Chapel. They are mostly Yoruba songs, which Cameroonians are made to sing. Some Cameroonians interpret this as a way of subordinating Cameroonian culture in favour of Nigerian culture in Cameroon. As another respondent commented:

To me it is like phasing out the Cameroonian style of worship. So we don't find an indigenous worship style in Cameroon. I should imagine that in French Cameroon, xylophones should be used as musical instruments while English Cameroonians use drums. I also think that songs in Meta or Mungaka and Douala respectively should be sung. Instead, we find Yoruba songs and Brass Band. I have no problem with the band but the way Cameroonians dance imitating what they watch on television happening in Nigeria and the way they sing and even preach, trying to imitate Nigerians is not helpful for the Cameroonian cultures. The Nigerian missionaries are also promoting this and it is as if it is not done the Nigerian way it is not authentic, in this way there is no real creativity over the years. You find the same songs for many years being sung in Cameroon. It phases out the local traditions and cultures and values. It is like copy and paste, copy Nigerian style preaching and paste it in Cameroon.¹²⁶

One of the most common Yoruba songs, which is sung in Winners' Chapel congregations in Cameroon as observed during fieldwork, goes like this: 'Ose Iee, Ose Iee, You Don Win Eh, Jesus You Don Win Oh, Lift Jesus Higher, Lift Him Higher. Onyenyenyin Imela Imela Imela Imela OOOOO, (Our good God has done well for us)'.

The major thrust of the argument in this section about the use of media in Winners' Chapel Cameroon is that Oyedepo's books and the electronic media are being used as evangelistic strategies to win members to the church but most

¹²⁵ J. D. Y. Peel, *Christianity, Islam, and Oriṣa Religion: Three Traditions in Comparison and Interaction* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016), 199.

¹²⁶ Pastor Job Molewe, Interview (18/11/15), Buea.

decisively to keep in check the proper transmission of his spiritual power to Cameroonians and thus, legitimise the presence of the Bishop in Cameroon while he operates from Nigeria. This certainly reveals how the accessibility of new media can give rise to new practices of mediation and how such practices stem from and impinge on changing power relations, between followers and leaders.¹²⁷ The understanding in Winners' Chapel is about how effective transformative spiritual power is communicated or about the successful transmission of spiritual power from the spiritually powerful, Bishop Oyedepo in this case, to those who are under his leadership and control and who are believed to benefit from Oyedepo's spiritual power and charisma. The very strategic presence of Nigerian missionaries in Cameroon to assist in the accomplishment of these goals provides the temporal power and remains significant.

Asonzeh Ukah has helpfully conceptualised Max Weber's theory of charisma to reflect the arguments in the preceding sections of this chapter. According to Ukah, charismatisation is a process which implies the recognition and acceptance of the legitimacy of the charismatic leader among his followers. Ukah suggests that charismatic authority is often unstable and for that reason, requires a process of routinisation to provide a secure anchor for the exercise of authority and legitimacy. For this to be achieved, 'the leader's personal authority is vested on his representatives and officials in such a manner that they now share in the aura of his or her office'.¹²⁸ In this study, representatives and officials who share and transmit Oyedepo's power and legitimate his leadership position are Nigerian missionaries, who achieve their goals by maintaining the temporal power through holding key

¹²⁷ Birgit Meyer, 'Impossible Representations: Pentecostalism', *Vision and Video Technology in Ghana*, undated paper, 2006.

¹²⁸ Asonzeh Ukah, 'The Redeemed Christian Church of God',

administrative positions while leading flourishing churches that had been planted by their Cameroonian colleagues. In this regard, one perceives an aspect of changing power relations between the two groups because one would normally expect Nigerian missionaries to plant churches in Cameroon and then hand them over to the indigenes. But if the reverse has happened, as seems to be the case, then one could also speak of the hegemony of Nigerian Winners' Chapel missionaries in Cameroon. For this reason, as the next section will argue, Cameroonian indigenous pastors are feeling alienated, discriminated against and have said that they are now treated as 'foreigners in their own nation'.

5.4. 'We are Foreigners in our own Nation': Cameroonian Reactions to Nigerian Missionaries

In the previous sections, I have noted that the presence and influence of Nigerian Winners' Chapel missionaries in Cameroon and the accompanying practices, which they promote, point to what some observers within the church have described as a cultural infiltration. However, the administrative engagements and leadership of the missionaries that have provoked contestations between the latter and Cameroonian indigenous pastors of the church show how Cameroonians feel-sometimes discriminated against and therefore alienated. There is one area of operation within Winners' Chapel that reveals how the dynamics of power are teased out between the Nigerian missionaries and their Cameroonian colleagues. This involves an argument about the late stage in the life of a congregation at which Nigerian missionaries come into Cameroon and their continuous leadership in key positions in the Cameroonian Winners' Chapel. The remainder of the chapter will therefore discuss the nature of the role played by Nigerian missionaries in Cameroon, which suggests that it approximates to a form of hegemony, and comment on the consequent feeling among

some Cameroon members of the church that they are now viewed as foreigners in their own country.

5.4.1. Cameroonian Church Planters and Nigerian Missionaries, Church Leaders

As earlier noted, there are currently approximately twenty Nigerian missionaries in Cameroon who are leading Winners' Chapel both as pastors of local congregations and administrators. The National Pastor and all district heads including some Zonal Pastors of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon are Nigerian missionaries.¹²⁹ But apart from the first Winners' Chapel congregation at Ndogbong that was established by the first missionaries in 1996, Cameroonian indigenous pastors have been responsible for planting new congregations. Cameroonians also planted the most lucrative congregations that represent the four districts of the church which are now led by Nigerians. Nigerian missionaries have continuously occupied these positions, possibly because they provide a vantage point of contact for the effective transmission of the spiritual power, and implementation of the vision of Bishop Oyedepo.¹³⁰ But Cameroonian pastors are complaining that Nigerian missionaries ought to plant churches and not inherit flourishing ones that had been planted and grown by them. The evidence is contained in a 2015 memorandum of thirty-five points signed by all the full-time Cameroonian indigenous pastors of the church. It asks the Nigerian leadership to explain 'why missionaries who are supposed to be church planters are instead the ones handling all the larger congregations, living in the best houses, driving in cars, their wives being paid and not us who planted the

¹²⁹ Telephone conversation with Pastor Peter Toh, (17/02/17).

¹³⁰ Pastor Silas Yong, Interview (02/02/16), Douala.

churches'.¹³¹ Some examples of churches planted and fully established by Cameroonians and which are now led by missionaries include: Bamenda, Tiko, Buea, Limbe, Biyamassi-Yaoundé and Bonaberi-Douala. For example, Pastor Greenfield Nchia planted the Limbe church, Pastor Clement Mababad planted the Bonaberi church and Pierre Siegnie planted the first Winners' Chapel congregation in Yaoundé.¹³² Greenfield later served in Bonaberi and relocated the church from a temporary to a near permanent building (Cinema Fouato), which is being rented in order to accommodate the increasing number of members he had brought to the church. After Greenfield had raised the church from about 84 to over 800 members with a corresponding financial growth,¹³³ a Nigerian missionary, Victor Hill, was sent to replace Greenfield and the latter served from 2013-15.¹³⁴ Another Nigerian missionary replaced Victor Hill in February 2016.¹³⁵

The conception of mission in Winners' Chapel in which expatriates replace the indigenous pastors who have planted churches is an unusual inversion of the normal pattern of mission whereas expatriates do the church planting and gradually—often too gradually—hand over responsibility to indigenous pastors. The reason Winners' Chapel rely on indigenous pastors to plant churches, but then replace them by expatriate missionaries, appears to be to allow the latter to integrate the newly planted congregations within the power structures and ethos of the organisation as defined in Nigeria. This explains why the Nigerian leadership sometimes overlooks the Provincial Council of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon that is composed of both

¹³¹ Cameroonian pastors Union (C.P.U) WMA-Cameroon, 'Our Observation and a Call for an Extraordinary General Assembly Meeting with all Full-Time pastors and the National Church Committee', A Memorandum addressed to the National Pastor of Winners' Chapel Cameroon, dated 4th May 2015.

¹³² Various Interviews and conversations with pastors, other church leaders and members of the Winners' Chapel in Buea, Douala, Bamenda and Yaoundé, 2014, 15 and 16.

¹³³ Elder Philemon, Interview (12/11/15), Douala.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Personal observation Bonaberi-Douala, February 2016.

Nigerian missionaries and Cameroonians and is charged with overseeing the administration of the church in Cameroon.¹³⁶ The Nigerian leadership has also failed to call a general assembly for the past three years,¹³⁷ probably to avoid any forum where issues about the legitimate position of Cameroonians within the church could be addressed.

One of the ways in which Winners' Chapel Nigeria missionaries exert their power and influence in Cameroon is to side-line other constituted authorities of the church in Cameroon and to subdue any group that opposes their leadership.¹³⁸ This explains why some Cameroonian indigenous pastors have wondered whether the Nigerian administration of the church in Cameroon is a 'dictatorial or a communist government'.¹³⁹ The evidence suggests that Cameroonian pastors are unable to influence any change or even complain to the hierarchy of Winners' Chapel both in Cameroon and Nigeria in case they are dissatisfied with the way the church in Cameroon is managed and what role they might play. Thus when Cameroonian indigenous pastors submitted the 2015 memorandum to the Nigerian leadership asking them to address thirty-five points, which they described as alienating them from the church in their own country, this is the rather poignant reply that they received:

It has come to our notice that full time pastors under the aegis of Cameroonian pastors Union (CPU) wrote the national pastor some unscrupulous things and copied the various hierarchies. This is quite embarrassing, ungodly and not the spirit of this commission (Mandate section 18...). At this juncture, we would like all our pastors who are not part of this anti-mandate practice to dissociate themselves in writing within 24 hours.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Cameroonian pastors Union (C.P.U) WMA-Cameroon, 'Our Observation', 4th May 2015.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Pastor Victor Bong, Interview (02/02/16), Douala.

¹³⁹ Cameroonian pastors Union (C.P.U) WMA-Cameroon, 'Our Observation', 4th May 2015.

¹⁴⁰ National Disciplinary Committee Cameroon, Re: Cameroonian pastors Union (CPU): Warning to stop Every Attempt to Corrupt pastors to Lie to Leadership to Protect your Evil Doings against God. Letter dated 11th May 2015.

Some of the alleged ‘unscrupulous things’ are specified in the following questions posed in the memorandum:

- Tell us why you (Nigerians) don’t show compassion to a suffering pastor, his family members when they are abandoned in hospital without any help. And even when one dies you abandon his corpse like what happened to late pastor Ngwa who was from Bamenda. But when it concerns you Nigerians, your wives or children, big amounts of money are released. What do you take us for?
- Tell us why Cameroonians don’t have the right to benefit all the advantages of staff in this country as provided by the Mandate. For example, Annual Leave, Leave Allowance, or other bonuses like out of station allowances? All these are only for Nigerians. Why? Seeing you force us to produce results in a very poor work environment.
- What gives you the right to abuse, slight, shout at and beat Cameroonian pastors as you did beat pastor Manga in Douala and sent him out like a goat? Even Bishop Oyedepo for whom we are all working does not treat pastors this way. Can you make a pastor? Do you know we are God’s servants and not your children?
- Also tell us why in two different meetings we were separated from Nigerian pastors (never called to attend). What were you hiding from us?
- Tell us why you Nigerian pastors in Cameroon don’t respect the church Mandate, the constitution of World Mission Agency (WMA) Inc in Cameroon and even our legislation as a Nation?
- Tell us why is it that anytime a church grows in the hand of a Cameroonian pastor he is ejected from the church for a Nigerian to take over? Is it because of our incompetence as the regional said here on the altar or because that is what the Mandate says?¹⁴¹

The conclusion of the memorandum by the Cameroonian pastors is even more forthright:

With all these and many more, we can conclude that you Nigerians do take us for fools and see our government as incapable as you come into the nation without any work contract as it should be, do what you want, and go with what you want without any fear. You call us foreigners in our own nation; you take us as slaves for the Nigerians in our own country. We think enough is enough... And let us warn you, we will not tolerate any form of intimidation this time around.¹⁴²

It seems evident that within this acrimonious exchange between Nigerian missionaries and Cameroonian indigenous pastors, the complaint from Cameroonian pastors about their perceived alienation in Winners’ Chapel did not result in any

¹⁴¹ Cameroonian Pastors Union (C.P.U) WMA-Cameroon, ‘Our Observation’, 4th May 2015.

¹⁴² Ibid.

constructive dialogue that might have led to a solution to the problem. Rather, the Nigerian church leadership appears determined to quash any perceived rebellion from their Cameroonian colleagues. They were expected to dissociate themselves from the Union of Cameroonian pastors which in the view of the missionaries was ‘ungodly and not the spirit of this commission’. However, the Cameroonian pastors did not relent their efforts toward seeking justice about what they perceived to be a Nigerian arrangement that was intended to denude Cameroon of its resources for the personal gain of Nigerians.¹⁴³ Having failed to get a favourable reply from Winners’ Chapel leadership, and perceiving that the latter might be deliberately blocking any communication between the Cameroonian indigenous pastors and the leadership of the church in Nigeria, Cameroonian pastors decided to seek help from the Nigerian High Commissioner to Cameroon. In a letter addressed to the latter on 18 May 2015 entitled, ‘Pleading for your intervention to contact the presidency of Living Faith Church Worldwide aka Winners’ Chapel International’, the Cameroonian pastors claimed that physical and communication barriers had been constructed at the international level, which made it difficult for Cameroonians to communicate or have physical contact with Bishop Oyedepo. The letter also raised issues concerning delay in payment of salaries, noncompliance with the vision of Oyedepo and irregular periods of transfer that affect the education of children of the Cameroonian pastors. At least four other salient points which appear in the letter addressed to the Nigerian High Commissioner to Cameroon strengthen the evidence:

- Cameroonian pastors are now mature enough-mentally and spiritually, to manage churches under the World Mission Agency Inc. (WMA) in Cameroon.
- In this regard, the WMA should with immediate effect stop sending missionaries pastors from Nigeria to manage Cameroon churches.
- By implication, Nigerian pastors working under the WMA, on mission in Cameroon, should be withdrawn and sent elsewhere within the next one

¹⁴³ Pastor Victor Bong, Interview, Douala.

month so that pastors from Cameroon would also have the privilege to see the WMA Inc. president and even communicate with him, from a distance or at close range, if need be.

- In place of the constitution of Living Faith Churches Worldwide, the internal Rules and Regulations under WMA Inc. Cameroon should be scrupulously implemented in Cameroon. By so doing, Pastors of the same level will enjoy the same advantages and make the Liberation Mandate a reality and not a dream to those in the Commission.¹⁴⁴

I was unable to discover any reply letter to the Cameroonian indigenous pastors from the Nigerian High Commissioner to Cameroon. But the evidence suggests that the Cameroonian pastors are struggling to resist what they perceive as domination from Nigerian missionaries. It also shows that Cameroonian indigenous pastors are craving the indigenisation of the church in Cameroon because they feel confident enough to lead and make their own contributions toward realising the Liberation Mandate of Bishop Oyedepo. But what is also conspicuous in these contestations is that Nigerian missionaries whether consciously or unconsciously, appear to be trying to prevent any prospect of indigenisation of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. If this is true then it contradicts Bishop Oyedepo's commitment to the indigenisation of his church, on which some scholars have commented. For example, Selome Kuponu argued that AGIP shortlisted 63 persons in the year 2000 who were enlisted as indigenous missionaries from African countries and ordained as pastors and later posted to some of the new churches established by AGIP.¹⁴⁵ According to Kuponu, this initiative was in consonance with the euthanasia of mission propounded by Henry Venn in the nineteenth century to encourage the idea of training indigenous leadership. Venn had suggested that 'as early as possible local leadership should replace the missionary'.¹⁴⁶ But for the past twenty years of the existence of Winners'

¹⁴⁴ Cameroon Pastors Union, World Mission Agency, Re: 'Pleading for your Intervention to Contact the President of Living Faith Church Worldwide aka Winners' Chapel International'. Letter addressed to the Nigerian High Commissioner to Cameroon dated 18th May 2015.

¹⁴⁵ Kuponu, 'The Living Faith Church (Winners' Chapel), Nigeria', 37.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Chapel in Cameroon, the idea of indigenisation remains a blind spot. However, Cameroon is not the only African country where Nigerian Winners' Chapel missionaries have been involved in leadership and administration of the church. For example, there are Nigerian Winners' Chapel missionaries in South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, and Ghana. When members and the presiding Bishop of one of the most affluent Winners' Chapel churches in Ghana became fed up with the control and exploitation from the Nigerian leadership, the church seceded and is now called Winners' Chapel Ghana as different from Winners' Chapel International. The Ghanaian bishop owns the former while Bishop Oyedepo owns the latter.¹⁴⁷ It may well be that one reason Oyedepo prefers to use Nigerian missionaries instead of indigenes in the different African countries is to avoid losing some of his church branches as happened in Ghana. If this is the case then one might conclude that, in trying to solve one problem, Bishop Oyedepo has created another by initiating a form of categorisation within his movement which profiles one group - the Nigerian missionaries - as owners/landlords and the others - Cameroonian indigenous pastors - as caretakers/tenants-and even foreigners in their own land.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has examined intra-African Pentecostalism and the dynamics of power by using the Winners' Chapel in Cameroon as an example. The debate was introduced by investigating Nigerian missionary incursions into Cameroon and the politics of soft power. Evidence from my fieldwork concerning this section revealed that Nigerian missionaries are sent to Cameroon to keep the church alive and to provide a distinguished leadership because Cameroonian pastors are still deemed to be incapable of leading the churches in their home country. In relation to this

¹⁴⁷ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*.

judgment, Nigerian missionaries are also seen as providing mentorship to Cameroonians who would be expected to lead their churches when they are fully qualified. The main argument of the chapter has been that Cameroonians are generally attracted to Nigerian intra-African preachers and Winners' Chapel appears to be taking advantage of this and using Nigerian missionaries in Cameroon. But the claim that Cameroonian indigenous pastors of Winners' Chapel have not been capable of leading the church for the past twenty years has been problematised by providing evidence which shows that indigenous pastors of the church have been trained and have served the church since 2002. The second section of the chapter introduced the debate about the homogenisation of the church as a possible motive for the presence of Nigerian missionaries in Cameroon. The training that missionaries are expected to receive before engaging in foreign missions, and the reproduction and use of Nigerian-prepared sermons and testimonies in Cameroon highlight the determination of Winners' Chapel to protect its values, transmit and wield spiritual power beyond Nigeria. However, the spectacular use of electronic media to capture the presence of Bishop Oyedepo from Nigeria in all the viewing centres of his church in the world significantly shows how charismatic and spiritual power can cross international boundaries. The example of Winners' Chapel provides a model of how modern electronic media collapses transnational space and bring people of the same worldview closed to each other. In this way the unique spiritual power of Oyedepo becomes present in his absence, so that as Cameroonians view the programmes of the church broadcast from Nigeria on the satellite, they actually believe that they are in the same space as the Bishop and can benefit from his blessings in much the same way as those present in Nigeria. The final section of this chapter examined the hegemonic role of Nigerian Winners' Chapel missionaries in Cameroon. By sending Nigerian Winners' Chapel missionaries to lead the church in

Cameroon while pastoring churches that were planted by Cameroonians and are already flourishing, the Winners' Chapel missionary paradigm is a reversal of earlier patterns of mission where missionaries planted and handed over churches to indigenes. The evidence suggests that Nigerian missionaries have absolute control and authority over Cameroonians and their power is not power with Cameroonians but power over Cameroonians. Whilst Cameroonian indigenous pastors are trying to resist the power of the Nigerian missionaries by asking questions and trying to seek answers, the latter are determined to quash the former and prevent any form of indigenisation of the church in Cameroon. Nevertheless, within the leadership and power structures of the Nigerian missionaries, there may still exist some potential for the provision of social capital and empowerment to Cameroonians. Chapter 6 will examine this possibility.

CHAPTER SIX

An Assessment of the Contributions of Winners' Chapel to Social Capital and Empowerment in Cameroon

6.1. Introduction

Sociologists of religion and scholars of world Christianity have significantly profiled APCCs as capable of promoting ideas that shape the social behaviour of societies and improve the economic wellbeing and quality of life of members of their communities. For example, Danny McCain argues that Nigerian APCCs have evolved from being churches preoccupied with signs and wonders in their congregations to providing service and influence in society. Using the Guiding Light Assembly Pentecostal church of Nigeria as an example, McCain chronicled this evolution as the 'metamorphosis of Nigerian Pentecostalism...' and showed that APCCs were alleviating poverty and providing basic necessities to people in their communities.¹ Robert Akoko has similarly suggested that Pentecostalism became prominent in Cameroon in the 1990s because the movement provided hope to poor and unemployed Cameroonians by offering jobs and preaching the gospel of prosperity in a time of economic crisis.² Elsewhere, Afe Adogame has suggested that APCCs serve as providers of 'social, cultural and spiritual capital.'³

This perceived relevance of APCCs in local and global contexts has been conceptualized in various ways including: 'Religion and development',⁴ 'Religion as

¹ Danny McCain, 'The Metamorphosis of Nigerian Pentecostalism: From Signs and Wonders in the Church to Service and influence in Society' in Donald Miller, Kimon H. Sargeant, and Richard Flory (eds.) *Spirit and Power: the Growth and Global Impact of Pentecostalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 160-177.

² Akoko, 'Ask and You Shall be Given', 2007.

³ Afe Adogame, *The African Christian Diaspora*, 101-122.

⁴ Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar, *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa* (London: Hurst and Company), 2004.

social capital',⁵ Pentecostalism and empowerment'⁶ and even 'unction to function'.⁷ In this way, APCCs are seen as engineering processes of development by empowering their adherents and communities. This has led J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu to conclude that motifs of empowerment feature prominently in the ethos and ministries of APCCs and these have greatly benefitted their members towards developmental goals.⁸

This chapter contributes to the debate on Pentecostalism, empowerment and development from a transnational perspective. It aims to investigate and assess the extent to which Winners' Chapel is providing impetus toward the empowerment/development of Cameroonians and their communities. The overriding question is, to what extent and in what ways Winners' Chapel in Cameroon does in fact serve as a source of social capital and empowerment in Cameroon? The chapter begins with an analysis of the various areas in which Winners' Chapel in Cameroon has undoubtedly proved to be a source of social capital and empowerment. It next develops an argument about the subtle ways in which Winners' Chapel in Cameroon may nevertheless actually be preventing empowerment. It then finally suggests that some gifted Cameroonians may paradoxically be using the Winners' Chapel as a launching pad for their own independent ministries, selecting what they find helpful in Winners' Chapel but rejecting what they have found constricting. In this way, the very disempowerment they have experienced in Winners' Chapel has become a stimulus to autonomous initiative.

⁵ Corwin E. Smidt (ed.) *Religion as Social Capital: Producing the Common Good*, (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press), 2003.

⁶ Tettey, 'Pentecostalism and Empowerment: A Study of the Church of Pentecost and International Central Gospel Church' (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2015), 62.

⁷ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 120.

⁸ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 132-163.

The chapter will significantly benefit from Levitt's concept of 'social remittances', which she defines 'as the ideas, behaviours and social capital that flow from receiving to sending communities'.⁹ Adogame has interpreted Levitt's concept of 'remittance' to include nonmaterial as well as financial phenomena and has problematised what he calls 'Social Capital and transnational religious networks', by asking the question: 'what resources flow across national borders that have a bearing on religious institutions, personnel, objects, beliefs and ritual practices?'¹⁰ This question will be helpful in the analysis I aim to make about the contributions of Nigerian Winners' Chapel in the socioeconomic life of Cameroon.

6.2. Winners' Chapel: A Source of Social Capital/Empowerment in Cameroon

There are at least four conspicuous areas in which Winners' Chapel has undoubtedly contributed to social capital and empowerment in Cameroon. These include: humanitarian services to the poor and vulnerable of society, the provision of basic necessities such as good drinking water, the promotion of physical health and the transformation of the lives of adherents from wasteful lifestyles to more productive ones.

6.2.1. Humanitarian Services to the Poor and Vulnerable of Society

According to Bishop Oyedepo's 'Mandate', the Humanitarian Services of Winners' Chapel are intended to serve as:

- A rescue mission to mankind
- A mission to the hurting world
- A mission to helpless humanity

⁹ Peggy Levitt, 'Local-Level Global Religion: The Case of US-Dominican Migration', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 3 (1998): 74-89.

¹⁰ Adogame, *The African Christian Diaspora*, 101-122.

- Engaging in various life line rescue initiatives such as in: War and natural disaster areas, water borne-diseases and other endemics, conflict resolutions across Africa, education Aids in form of bursary awards/scholarships, building of mission schools and vocational training in areas of need.¹¹

One way in which Winners' Chapel achieves these objectives in Cameroon is by operating a welfare system which is intended to provide help to the less fortunate of society. Each congregation has a Welfare Committee, which is charged with the responsibility to examine applications from potential beneficiaries in order to make decisions on whether or not they are eligible to benefit from the church's support scheme.¹² The welfare programme of the church operates in two ways: the first one is general and takes place about twice a year on chosen Sundays that are dubbed 'Operation Andrew'.¹³ Members are asked to invite their less fortunate neighbours and friends to church to benefit from food items, dresses and other valuable items donated by the church members.¹⁴ The second scheme involves donations of money to unemployed members of the church for starting off small businesses or to help pay medical and other bills. For someone to benefit from any help, he/she must be an active member of a Satellite Fellowship¹⁵ because this is the growth organ of the church from where church members are initially identified and become active. According to Oyedepo, 'each one has a part to play in growing the body so as to

¹¹ Oyedepo, *The Mandate*, 406.

¹² Pastor Dominion, personal conversations with the author in Douala, 2015.

¹³ The concept of Operation Andrew that requires church members to bring a friend to church has probably been borrowed from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. It is based on the fact that when Andrew heard what John had said about Jesus, the first thing he did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'we have found the Messiah' and he brought Simon to Jesus. This is surely one way the Winners Chapel uses to recruit new members into the church even though the pastors do not totally agree with that but rather claim that their gifts are a matter of charity and nothing else!

¹⁴ Elder Emmanuel Yele, Interview (7/11/15), Douala.

¹⁵ Oyedepo sees Satellite Fellowships as growth organs of the church within the parishes made up small numbers of church members who meet every Saturday in the home of a chosen leader who may be an elder, deacon or deaconess. Satellite Fellowships act as the care centre of the church and provide a platform where young people in the faith can ask questions and receive answers. It provides spiritual care and practical attention for the needs of individuals. See also Oyedepo, *The Mandate: Operational Manual*, 71.

actualise a high rate of multiplication of the church'.¹⁶ After discussing his/her problem with the leader of the Satellite Fellowship, applicants fill out an application form that is provided by the church and later submitted to the leader of the Satellite Fellowship for onward transmission to the Welfare Committee. It is the responsibility of the Welfare Committee to decide how much they can give a member regardless of the amount requested. For example, an office bearer in one of the congregations in Douala had requested the sum of 120,000 FRS to complete payment of 400,000 FRS toward medical expenses of his wife but he finally received the sum of 50,000 FRS despite the fact that he had been promised the whole amount.¹⁷ Members who do not receive the whole amount of money they requested might complain that the church could do better in its compassionate services but we have to note that by offering any help at all in this way, Winners' Chapel is contributing reasonably to lessen the burdens of its members. Other members of the church have received money ranging from 20,000 FRS to 60,000 FRS to start off small businesses such as Call Box.¹⁸

The church also contributes toward empowering some Cameroonians in their educational pursuits through donations and prayers. At the beginning of each school year and just before school and public exams are taken, each congregation organises a church service where pupils and students are prayed for and school materials are anointed with olive oil and donated to both members and non-members, who are usually invited by the former to benefit from this gesture.¹⁹ This initiative is intended to assist the less fortunate of society by providing books, pens, pencils and

¹⁶ Ibid, 72.

¹⁷ Elder Isaiah Lah, Interview (12/11/15), Douala.

¹⁸ Pastor Cyprian Kum, Interview (9/11/15), Douala. A Call Box is a make shift box produced out of plywood and fortified with planks. It usually has space which can contain an individual who provides quick telephone communication services to passers-by for money. Customers are usually charged per minute of communication.

¹⁹ Pastor Collins Bua, Interview (12/11/15), Douala.

sometimes school fees to them, but many members of Winners' Chapel also believe that the prayers that are said over these materials by the church pastors and elders guarantee success and protection from any evil that might threaten to destroy one's future. Deaconess Denicia Kolo informed me that her success in the 2008 General Certificate of Education was due largely to the blessings and anointing that she received during such a prayer session. She had previously failed the exam twice while still a member of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon despite the fact that a similar service often took place, with the significant exception that there the pens and other writing materials were never anointed with olive oil in the latter church.²⁰ When Asamoah-Gyadu spoke of 'unction to function' in Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Ghana, he was referring to how anointing with olive oil enabled people to make progress and succeed in a world they generally regard to be precarious.²¹ By employing the use of olive oil in Winners' Chapel in Cameroon, the church hopes to empower people for success in addition to the physical gifts that the church offers. Winners' Chapel in Buea Molyko congregation spends approximately 200,000 FRS at the beginning of each school year to buy books and other school items for children in their communities.²²

²⁰ Deaconess Denicia Kolo, Interview (21/11/15), Bamenda.

²¹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 121.

²² Pastor Job Molewe, Interview (18/01/16), Buea.



Figure Three: Anointing service taking place at Winners' Chapel Ndogbong. Members holding out their hands with olive oil in their palms as the pastor prays.

During the anointing service shown in the picture above, members of the church were asked to pour out into their palms some of the olive oil they had brought with them to church or bought outside the church. The pastor then said prayers in which he declared that all our problems would disappear after the anointing. Each one of us were then asked to rub the oil on our foreheads or on which ever part of our body that was sick or maimed. We also had the choice to lick the oil and declare anything we were seeking from God, ranging from financial breakthrough to riches and promotion in our different jobs or careers. This is one dimension of the empowerment of Winners' Chapel members in Cameroon.

Other charitable works of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon that are empowering involve the donation of food items and clothing to those who have been displaced from their homes because of wars and civil unrest. In 2015, Winners' Chapel sent relief materials to the northern regions of Cameroon as humanitarian aid to the victims of Boko Haram. The aid was worth 5 million francs and included bags of rice, other food items and dresses that had been contributed by the church members and supplemented from the church's coffers.²³ Pastor Victor Hill justifies these charitable actions of the church to victims of war by quoting the words of Jesus: 'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed help and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me'.²⁴

Hill therefore suggests that there are no other motives for the church in doing this except following the command of Christ. He even argues that beneficiaries are never compelled to join the church.²⁵ The importance of such humanitarian services offered by Winners' Chapel can helpfully be qualified by examining the statistics of victims of various tragedies provided by some world organisations. For example, the United Nations estimates that more than 2 million people have been displaced from their homes in Nigeria and Cameroon, most of whom are living in the Refugee Camps in Minawao in the Northern Regions of Cameroon.²⁶ This means that the Winners' Chapel relief programme is a very helpful initiative. But the church has also been helpful in providing for other basic needs within communities in Douala such as good drinking water.

²³ Pastor Pierre Mua, Informal Conversations (17/11/15), Douala.

²⁴ Mathew 25:35-40, New International Version of the Bible.

²⁵ Pastor Victor Hill, Interview (20/11/15), Douala.

²⁶ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51465#.WASwh4cVCUK>: (Accessed 17/10/2010).

6.2.2. Provision of Drinking Water

Since 2010, Winners' Chapel has a borehole at the national headquarters of the church in Ndogbong-Douala, which provides drinking water to that community. This project was developed because of the impending problem of water crisis in Cameroon but especially in this neighbourhood where despite the supply of water by SNEC²⁷ Cameroon, the commodity is in high demand because of population growth. Most people purchased water from commercial water sellers and sometimes had to walk long distances in order to fetch water especially when the SNEC supply was interrupted.²⁸ Winners' Chapel therefore decided to install a borehole in the Ndogbong neighbourhood right on the outside wall of the church, partly to solve this problem. The water is free to the public and maintained by the church.²⁹

²⁷ 'The National Water Supply Company of Cameroun (SNEC) is a mixed economy structure company with the legal personality and financial autonomy. See, <http://www.cameroonpages.net/info/the-national-water-supply-company-of-cameroun-snec-45.html>: (Accessed 17/10/16).

²⁸ Pastor Peter Toh, Interview (12/10/15), Douala.

²⁹ Pastor Collins Bua, Interview (14/01/16), Douala.



Figure Four: Picture of Borehole in Ndogbong-Douala fixed on the wall of the church fence and conspicuously carrying the picture of Bishop Oyedepo and his wife, Faith Oyedepo.

This water project remains an asset to the Ndogbong neighbourhood because apart from partly solving the problem of water shortage in Cameroon and specifically in Douala, some users claim that it also provides healing. According to Pastor Wanki of Bonaberi congregation, the healing potency of the water may not be unrelated to the prayers that were offered by the church's anointed authorities during the inauguration of the borehole.³⁰

There are at least two testimonies which suggest that people with different ailments have received healing after drinking from this tap. One is from a member of

³⁰ Pastor Wanki, Interview (9/11/15), Douala.

another Pentecostal Church who on passing to his church was supposedly directed by the Holy Spirit to drink from the tap and later on discovered that the pain in his stomach had disappeared. The next day he went to Winners' Chapel during one of their Morning Prayer sessions and gave his testimony. The second example is of a member of Winners' Chapel who upon hearing the testimony of the one who had been healed from stomach problem, decided to drink the water in a bid to cure an ailment in her throat. She too was healed.³¹ Commentators agree that most classical Pentecostal churches believed that recourse to scientific medicine was evidence of a lack of faith.³² However, this has largely changed in the later years with many PCCs increasingly taking part in more concrete actions toward promoting health programmes in their communities.

6.2.3. Promotion of Physical Health

Winners' Chapel in Cameroon has been involved in organising health campaigns and programmes that are intended to create awareness of some prevalent diseases and suggest how people might avoid them. For example, Winners' Chapel Douala organised a free health campaign in 2011, which was opened to the public.³³ The campaign involved free consultations and laboratory tests for diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, typhoid and general blood tests. Medical officers who attend the church and other medical practitioners who were hired for the one-week period of campaign pioneered the programme. Those who had any illnesses benefitted from free treatment sponsored by the church.³⁴ The church has also significantly supported existing medical institutions in Cameroon in order to boost the initiatives of

³¹ Pastor Collins Bua, Interview (14/01/16), Douala.

³² Marshall-Fratani, 'Mediating the global and local in Nigerian Pentecostalism', 278-315; Walker, 'The Pentecost Fire is Burning', 62-68.

³³ Pastor Titus Ngah, Interview (18/11/15), Douala; Elder Isaiah Lah, Interview (12/11/15), Douala.

³⁴ Ibid.

receiving institutions but also to create connections between Winners' Chapel and the former in Cameroon. The most conspicuous effort of Winners' Chapel in this domain was in 2010, when the church donated hospital equipment worth 10.000.000Frs to the Chantal Biya Foundation³⁵ in Yaoundé.³⁶ The gifts included the following essential medications such as anti-malarial drugs and antibiotics, two cylinders of oxygen, bags of rice and cartons of milk for children of up to two years of age. Pastor Emmanuel Chuka, senior pastor of Winners' Chapel Nfouda, Yaoundé was the head of the delegation that donated the gifts to the hospital. Chuka commended the efforts of Chantal Biya in catering for the health needs of humanity and suggested that the gesture of Winners' Chapel was intended to support this humanitarian work and also begin a long-lasting relationship between the Chantal Biya Foundation and Winners' Chapel in Cameroon.³⁷ The church in Ndogbong has also paid off medical bills for some of its members when they were admitted to the Lanquintinie Hospital in Douala.³⁸ Apart from the direct social services that Winners' Chapel provides to its members and the public, the church also provides an opportunity for members of the church to connect with others and subsequently gain employment.

³⁵ The Chantal Biya Foundation is an apolitical, non-denominational and non-profit humanitarian association, the Chantal BIYA Foundation was created by Mrs Chantal Biya, wife of Cameroon's Head of State in 1994 in order to raise national and international awareness on the fight against poverty, disease, misery and all types of exclusion in urban and rural areas. The main aim of the Chantal BIYA Foundation is to assist vulnerable segments of the population and combat hardship, available at: <https://www.prc.cm/en/the-first-lady/fcb>: (Accessed 14/09/16).

³⁶ Brenda Yufeh, 'Cameroon: Winners Chapel Donates to Chantal Biya Foundation', *Cameroon Tribune*, January 25 2010. Available at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201001251006.html>: (Accessed 14/09/16), Pastor Peter Toh, Interview (12/10/15) Douala.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Elder Jeremiah Bah, Interview (12/01/16), Douala.

6.3. Employment through Opportunities and church networks

The church also enables its members to gain jobs through the networks and connections that are developed among the church members. The well-to-do members of the church or business proprietors are encouraged to fill any vacancies in their companies with members of the church before looking elsewhere. Those with any such vacancies write out announcements with the job description and qualifications required and give them to the pastor who advertises the job in the course of a church service. Usually, the pastor reads out the advertisement without mentioning either details of the recruiting organisation or the contact address of the responsible officers. Any qualified and interested members are asked to meet the pastor privately in his office.³⁹ This is what some of the church leaders call positive discrimination because only active members of the church benefit from such announcements.⁴⁰ In this way, the church services become a vehicle to advertise job opportunities before they go public. For example, in November 2015 I was attending a church service in Bonaberi in which the pastor announced that a company in Douala was looking to employ an electrical engineer who had a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering.⁴¹ I was expecting to hear the other details of the company: a contact address or telephone number in order to inform my younger brother about the job because he holds a first degree in electrical engineering. But the pastor made no mention of such details but rather asked those who were interested and qualified to meet him in his office after the service. I later spoke to one of the assistant pastors about my intention to seek the job for my younger brother but when he found out that my brother was not a 'Winner', he told me the pastor was not going to release the details concerning the

³⁹ Participant observation, (07/11/2015), Douala.

⁴⁰ Pastor Samuel Anang, Interview (09/11/15), Douala.

⁴¹ Ibid.

job to me.⁴² By discriminating against those who are not members of the church in this way, Winners' Chapel aims to empower its members first before reaching out to others. This might be because if such members have the basic qualifications that are needed for particular jobs and in addition share the same values and virtues with employers who may belong with them to the same church, the latter might be confident that the former will be a reliable candidate for any jobs. Some scholars have referred to this as social capital - referring to the advantage and additional resources created for a person by their location in a structure of relationships.⁴³ The importance of social capital is that it provides the space for meeting of individuals, one of whom may have the possibility to offer a job and the other seeking a job that otherwise would not have been in contact with each other. In this case, the church to which both belong provides a common ground for meeting each other. Crucial in this process is the role of the pastor as the one who encourages the church members to seek any opportunities for advertisement to other members of the church who may need them. Social capital is therefore important because it makes possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence.⁴⁴ Winners' Chapel is evidently making good use of social capital within its ranks but the church has also been helpful in enabling members to create their own jobs.

6.3.1. Empowerment for Job Creation

Winners' Chapel has encouraged an entrepreneurial spirit in some Cameroonians through programmes and teaching that are meant to motivate church members to take personal responsibility for creating jobs for themselves. The themes of some of the Sunday morning services are telling. For example, the last three Sundays of October

⁴² Pastor Samuel Anang, Interview (09/11/15), Douala.

⁴³ Adogame, *The African Christian Diaspora*, 103.

⁴⁴ James Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', *American Journal of Sociology*, 94 (1988): S95-S120.

2014 (12, 19 and 26) had as themes: Day of Alliance with Progress, Day of Alliance with Favour and Day of Alliance with Supernatural Success. Sundays 18 and 25 October 2015 had as themes: Covenant Day of Fruitfulness and Covenant Day of Business and Career Breakthrough respectively.⁴⁵ On each of these Sundays, the prayers and sermons were focused on the selected theme and members were encouraged to seek such things as are applicable. Sometimes people were encouraged not to look beyond Cameroon for any breakthroughs but to be focused where they are in the confidence that God will bless them. According to Pastor Sam:

We teach our members that Cameroon is Africa in miniature indeed and that what they are seeking in faraway western countries can be achieved in Cameroon if they rely on God and make some efforts. Ask the Holy Ghost, 'what can I do to change my environment'? And he will help you. You don't need to travel to America or Europe to be rich and to live a good life everything is in this country. We pray for them and we anoint them for unlimited breakthroughs in life.⁴⁶

This seems to be a motivational and self-empowering ideology, which is intended to empower Cameroonians to seek the good life in their home country rather than run to far-off western countries in search of the Golden Fleece. This became especially important about this time because of the thousands of Africans who were reported dead when trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe.⁴⁷ Pastor Sam's advice was therefore to empower Cameroonians not to try to cross the Mediterranean to look for better economic possibilities but to create jobs for themselves in Cameroon. Such messages have empowered some young Cameroonians to develop their talents

⁴⁵ I was present in all these days and observed how the church services were concentrated around the major themes while the pastor encouraged people to engage into impossible adventures in life because God can always give people what they ask for. Anointing of the church members always accompanied the final prayers.

⁴⁶ Pastor Sam, Interview (18/01/16), Buea-Tiko.

⁴⁷ The BBC reported that at least 200 Senegalese were among the more than 750 migrants who died when a boat capsized off the coast of Libya on April 2015. These migrants were not fleeing war as would be expected of citizens of Syria who need to flee from their country which is being ravaged by war and civil unrest. The Senegalese were economic migrants, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-33791920>: (Accessed 17/10/16).

and impact their homeland instead of going abroad in search of the Golden Fleece. Examples include Pastors Fomera Sylvester and Simon Lega, proprietors of the Institute of Management and Financial Accounting (IMFA) Buea and the International College of Accounting and Sciences Molyko-Buea in Cameroon respectively.⁴⁸ These two proprietors joined Winners' Chapel when they were students of the University of Buea. They had learnt carefully from the teachings of Bishop Oyedepo on how to become prosperous. This happened at the time pastors Sam and Silas were resident pastors of the Buea church. The two proprietors later developed the wisdom they received into a creative spirit of entrepreneurship and despite pressure from other friends to travel abroad, Sylvester and Simon decided to found their own businesses in Cameroon.⁴⁹ Other members of the church have been encouraged to embark on great adventures because of similar teachings of the Bishop and are grateful for how useful their connection with the Winners' Chapel has been in comparison with their former churches:

When I compare my time in the Apostolic Church and now in Winners' Chapel, I can say that this church (Winners' Chapel) has been very helpful to me. The teachings of Bishop Oyedepo to his followers are unique. He teaches us to make wealth, he teaches the principles of financial prosperity. Then there is this particular captivating teaching that he always mentions about our place in the supernatural which makes me to understand that we can do all things through Christ. So it gave me the courage to take a big adventure. I started this Orphanage, which by the grace of God is doing very well even though it is not the kind of business I would have liked to do. I see it as a calling from God rather than a business.⁵⁰

The idea that Cameroonians do not need to go to the Western world in order to achieve their goals in life recalls a claim earlier made by Bishop Oyedepo when he started his ministry. Hitherto, Oyedepo had believed that a successful Pentecostal

⁴⁸ Pastor Sam, Interview (18/01/16), Buea-Tiko.

⁴⁹ Pastor Sam claims that the two proprietors delivered their testimonies to the church later on how the Winners' Chapel provided them with the confidence to begin their own businesses.

⁵⁰ Elder Isaiah Lah, Interview (12/11/15), Douala.

leader needed to study under giants and proponents of the faith gospel such as Kenneth E. Hagin, Oral Roberts, and T.L. Osborn. But just when Oyedepo was about to leave for the United States, he claims that God revealed to him that ‘the things that you seek do not come from abroad but from above. You are not going to America’.⁵¹ Oyedepo claims that with that instruction he stopped all arrangements of travelling to the United States at that time for training and since then, God has undertaken to train him in the school of the Holy Ghost, which has proved very useful.⁵² Oyedepo may not have travelled to the United States for training at that time as he claims but his subsequent excitement when told by the management of a hotel in the United States of America that he was about to spend the night in a room where Kenneth Copeland had once slept is contradictory indeed. Oyedepo prayed:

God, you know how much I love Copeland’s ministry, how much I appreciate your hand upon his life, how much he has affected our world for you, how much he has proved the devil wrong in demonstrating that you bless those you have called. Lord, as I go to sleep on this bed tonight, let those works in Copeland begin to work in me.⁵³

Oyedepo has also noted that in 1986 he travelled to Tulsa to learn from the ‘superhero’ of the faith message, Kenneth Hagin. During one of the sessions where Hagin was speaking, he (Oyedepo) had a divine encounter when ‘I saw his (Hagin’s) face transfigured... My heart exploded, and I began to sob openly. The Spirit entered into me and changed the entire course of my ministry... and the serenity of Kenneth Hagin’s style of ministrations was imparted to me instantly!’⁵⁴ These accounts suggest that Oyedepo learnt some of his preaching and teaching styles from North American proponents of the faith gospel. But whether he learnt most from American faith

⁵¹ Oyedepo, *The Mandate*, 18-19.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 133.

gospel preachers such as Kenneth Copeland whom he constantly invites to his Faith Tabernacle in Canaanland,⁵⁵ or from Pastor Adeboye who ordained him, or from the late Benson Idahosa who pioneered the prosperity gospel in African Pentecostalism, what is important to note is that Oyedepo's ideas are empowering local Cameroonians who are in turn creating jobs for themselves and impacting their communities. While such ideas have been helpful in providing impetus for some Cameroonians to make efforts towards creating their own jobs, the church has also provided direct employment to some Cameroonians.

6.3.2. Direct Employment of Cameroonians by Winners' Chapel

Winners' Chapel provides employment to the teeming youths and adults of Cameroon through the World Mission Agency (WMA).⁵⁶ Employees of the church are mainly concentrated in services within the approximately 129 congregations of the church that exist in Cameroon. Some of the positions involved are: resident pastors, assistant resident pastors, associate pastors, office assistants, church accountants, office secretaries, bookshop attendants, studio attendants, IT technicians, security officers and cleaners. At the top level of the church in Ndogbong are a National Pastor (Nigerian), the Church Administrator (Cameroonian) and about five accountants who centrally control the national accounts of the church in Cameroon. Workers are usually recruited through interviews by responsible officers of the church after which they are made to sign a contract form, which binds them to

⁵⁵ Kenneth Copeland was one of the officiating ministers at the 35th anniversary of the Living Faith Church Worldwide in Nigeria along with Pastor Enoch Adeboye in May 2016.

⁵⁶ The World Mission Agency is the name with which the Winners Chapel identifies its foreign branches. This is the umbrella name, which consists of churches and other investments such as schools that they church might possess wherever it is established.

certain rules and regulations including the compulsory criteria to belong to the Winners' Chapel and pay tithes to the church.⁵⁷

According to statistics which the author possesses, monthly salaries for these workers range from 30,000 FRS or approximately £42 for cleaners, security officers and others at the lower echelon to 428,707 FRS or approximately £535 for the highest paid Cameroonian who is also the longest serving full-time pastor of the church.⁵⁸ Each month the church spends about 15,237,500 FRS, (approximately £21,000) on salaries for its approximately 182 workers in Cameroon. The amount of money spent on salaries annually thus amounts to approximately 182,850,000 FRS, (approximately £250,500). The discrepancy between the highest paid worker who is a Nigerian earning about 1000,000Fr and the lowest paid worker, a cleaner or night watchman/woman earning about 30,000Fr, seems wide enough but the minimum salary of 30,000Fr paid by Winners' Chapel compares well with the average minimum wage that the Cameroonian government approves for payment to its citizens per month which is 28,246Fr.⁵⁹ Thus it seems to be the case that Winners' Chapel is paying better than the Cameroonian government rate. This contribution by Winners' Chapel is thus making a very modest contribution to reducing the unemployment rate and poverty in Cameroon. The 2013 report of the International Labour Organisation shows that Cameroon has a population of about 20 million people. Of that number 30% are unemployed.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Living Faith Church Worldwide (aka) Winners Chapel International, Stewardship Covenant for all Ordained Workers and Service Unit Leaders. Obtained in Douala by the author in January 2016.

⁵⁸ World Mission Agency INC, Winners Chapel International Manpower Schedule, 2015. Document containing the names of workers of the Winners Chapel posts of responsibly, current monthly salaries and year of entry. Obtained in Douala by author in January 2016.

⁵⁹ Cameroon 2013 Human Rights Report: Executive Summary, available at: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/220302.pdf>: (Accessed 09/09/16).

⁶⁰ Eddy Ukuh, 'Youth Unemployment Challenge in Cameroon', *The Observer*, August 18, 2015. Available at: <https://fuhsharon.wordpress.com/2015/08/18/youth-unemployment-in-cameroon/>: (Accessed 22/09/16).

One important aspect to note concerning employment of Cameroonians in Winners' Chapel is that the church is also able to train people before employing them. People who have dropped out of school for several reasons with relatively low qualifications can receive low cost training with the church and acquire jobs that can sustain their families, sometimes better than government jobs. An important training arm of the church is the Bible School popularly known as WOFBI, which trains pastors and other leaders of the church. For example, Mathew Fing, one of the pastors of the church who doubles as an accountant had dropped out of school after obtaining his primary School Graduation Certificate for lack of finances to further his education. But after completing the WOFBI programme⁶¹ of Winners' Chapel, which is less than a post-secondary school certificate, he was able to earn a salary that is equal to that of a secondary school Teacher or even more in Cameroon. In addition to that, Fing believes that working with Winners' Chapel provides a double advantage: the money he earns sustains his family, but he also claims that the unique spiritual anointing that flows from Bishop Oyedepo brings unstoppable breakthroughs. According to Pastor Fing:

I started working with Winners' Chapel in Cameroon since 1996 as a receptionist in the home of the first missionaries from Nigeria. Since then I have grown in this church in my faith and commitment and today I am one of the pastors and church accountants! I thank God. It is the Winners' Chapel that has made me who I am because if not for this church I am not sure what I will be doing and whether I would have the kind of satisfaction that I have working under the anointing of a great man of God like Bishop Oyedepo. I had dropped out of school because of lack of sponsorship before I came in contact with this church during its early beginnings. From the time I was employed my life has changed. I am married with two kids and can take care of my family without any problems. I am so grateful that Bishop Oyedepo had this vision for a church like this in Cameroon.⁶²

⁶¹ WOFBI is the main training arm of the Winners' Chapel and all members of the church are encouraged to take the Basic and Certificate Courses while pastors take a further Diploma course.

⁶² Pastor Mathew Fing, Interview (19/11/15), Douala.

Other respondents share the same view with Pastor Fing and some even claim that their relatives have also found employment in Winners' Chapel, mostly as office secretaries and in one case an accountant. These examples illustrate how those who have been employed by Winners' Chapel feel about the church. It also reveals how they appreciate the opportunity they have to serve Winners' Chapel and make a living through the remuneration, which comes with their services. It is not simply that my informants referred to the job satisfaction derived from working in an environment that they liked as being very empowering and reassuring. In addition, they testified that as well as earning money, they derived distinctive spiritual benefit from the anointing of the Bishop, which inspires them with hope and confidence toward overcoming challenges in life. These claims show the scope of the benefits that some Cameroonians believe to enjoy because of their attachment to a church whose founder they have come to regard as powerful enough to feed them through the jobs his church offers and also to give them assurance of a good and safe life because of the anointing that the Bishop and his ministry carries. The perception of anointing as a spiritual-symbolic act is a notable feature in African Pentecostalist discourses but anointing can also be a physical sacramental act and it seems to me from the accounts of my respondents that Winners' Chapel in Cameroon provides both to its members and workers. Asamoah-Gyadu has shown that anointing has a three-fold understanding in contemporary African Pentecostal thought: it is applied during prayer for healing the sick, is used for empowerment and fortification against supernatural evil, and that it can reverse the effects of evil and help people, objects, and places to function so that success and prosperity are realised.⁶³ The image of Oyedepo among his followers is that of a very powerful man of God whose constant conversations with God means that he has special revelations and understanding of

⁶³ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 123.

the workings of God that have the power to change lives. Asamoah-Gyadu comments that ‘whether a charismatic leader’s anointing is heavy or light... depends on the powerfulness of his ministry and how often his prayers are answered on worrying events in people’s lives’.⁶⁴ Apart from the provision of jobs, members of Winners’ Chapel also celebrate the fact that their conversion from other churches to Winners’ Chapel has indirectly helped them to make better use of their resources. The next section will narrate how one member of the church even uses the metaphor of drunkenness to describe her experience.

6.4. From ‘Drunkenness’ to ‘Drunkenness’: Narratives of Conversion and empowerment

Many converts to Pentecostal churches in Cameroon celebrate the rise of the movement and argue that promises of miracles and spiritual practices motivate them to leave other Christian denominations to join Pentecostal churches. Some of their experiences within these movements suggest that their lives may be better off than they used to be when they worshipped elsewhere. Thus, Ngum a member of Winners’ Chapel in Bamenda could remark that, ‘these days I am rather drunk with the Holy Spirit than drunk with wine’.⁶⁵ Ngum suggests that when she was member of a historic mission church, she was a drunk and often drank alcoholic drinks with her pastors. In those days, she thought drinking alcohol was a good idea because members of the congregation drank with their spiritual leaders. But since joining Winners’ Chapel, Ngum says she has left those bad habits and many other things have changed. Both she and her son suffered from poor health, and modern hospitals

⁶⁴ Ibid, 120.

⁶⁵ NAKINTI NOFURU, ‘Rise in Pentecostalism Conversions Makes Cameroonians Wary of Scams’, *Global Press Journal*, August 18, 2013. Available at: <http://www.globalpressjournal.com/africa/cameroon/rise-pentecostalism-conversions-makes-cameroonians-wary-scams>: (Accessed 25/08/2015).

and traditional healers provided no respite. Her husband was a flirt, which created infidelity concerns. But since the family joined Winners' Chapel, Ngum and her son have been healthy. She also describes her husband as a changed man. "My son and I no longer frequent the hospital," she says, "and my husband no longer runs after countless women, thanks to the power of being born-again."⁶⁶

The relevance of born-again Christianity in the lives of its adherents is not new in academic discourse especially within the sociology of religion. For example, Birgit Meyer suggested that converts to Pentecostal Christianity were 'making a complete break with the past'.⁶⁷ However, what is striking about the narrative of Ngum is the way in which she metaphorically conceptualises the bane and blessing of drunkenness in secular and religious contexts respectively. Ngum's testimony is suggestive of the role 'born-again' Christianity and Winners' Chapel in particular can play in reconstructing the lives of individuals and families within Cameroonian civil society. This is related to Michael Castor's suggestion that:

The process of conversion and becoming 'saved' teaches converts to undergo a paradigmatic shift of their lives, a transformation that practically entails not only making a complete break with their past sinful lives, but also restructuring their families. Conversion is therefore, a process of re-socialisation by which a convert is drawn away from the world of sin and in turn introduced into a family-oriented life.⁶⁸

To be converted to Winners' Chapel is not only to join a new and more rewarding family in terms of health and spirituality but also an opportunity to learn how to properly use one's resources. For Ngum being drunk with the Holy Spirit is better than being drunk with wine. But granted that Winners' Chapel in Cameroon provides

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Meyer, 'Make a complete break with the past', 316-349.

⁶⁸ Michael Castor, 'The Gospel of Prosperity in African Pentecostalism', (PhD diss., University of Wien, 2013).

jobs to Cameroonian citizens and empowers them in other ways, we must now consider other implications of these supposed contributions to the economic life of Cameroon especially with respect to how resources are exchanged between the mother church in Nigeria and the daughter church in Cameroon.

The number of Cameroonians that are employed by Winners' Chapel in Cameroon may not be significant in national terms. However, when compared with other transnational APCCs like the RCCG, the efforts of Winners' Chapel in employing Cameroonians are relatively better. The RCCG has less than 100 church branches in Cameroon and employs approximately 76 pastors⁶⁹ with an average salary of about 25,000 FRS a month.⁷⁰ Some leaders and church members of Winners' Chapel have therefore claimed that Winners' Chapel is the best and most influential Pentecostal church in Cameroon in terms of its investments in the economic and social life of the country. According to Pastor Peter Amah:

The contributions that Winners' Chapel is currently making to the economic and social life of Cameroon are amazing. Just after twenty years we have been able to establish more than two hundred churches, employing over 200 Cameroonians who can earn bread for their families. We have got at least one permanent church structure in each regional headquarters of this country and that is development in itself. Look at other churches like Redeemed, they are still struggling to reach where we are and I tell you that in the next ten years you will see the structures that we will have in this land.⁷¹

Pastor Peter Amah supplies a very confident and optimistic narrative about the work of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon and the prospect it has for the near future. However, it is possible to argue that, although Winners' Chapel is doing well in this respect in

⁶⁹ Redeemed Christian Church of God, Central African Region: A Document listing all the Redeemed Christian Church Parishes in Cameroon with the dates of establishment and pastors in charge. The author obtained the document from the resident Pastor of the Redeemed Christian Church of God-Shepherd House, Bonaberi in Douala during fieldwork in Cameroon in November 2015.

⁷⁰ Pastor George Njonyu, Pastor of Shepherd House-Redeemed Christian Church of God, Interview (20/11/15), Bonaberi.

⁷¹ Pastor Peter Amah, Interview (18/01/16), Buea-Tiko.

comparison to other APCCs in Cameroon, when compared with other Pentecostal churches in the country such as those of the classical types, the contributions of Winners' Chapel are a mere trickle. According to statistics for the year 2000 of the Full Gospel Mission Church in Cameroon obtained by Robert Mbeh Akoko in 2007, there were 518 assemblies of the church in Cameroon constituting a membership of over 59,062. In addition to those assemblies where pastors are employed, the church runs six Nursery and Primary Schools, One Bilingual Teacher Training College in Mbengwi, a Technical College in Muyuka and a Secondary School in Bamenda. There are two health Centres in Garoua and Yaoundé, which the church hopes to transform into hospitals in the near future. There are two other Health Centres in Mbakeng and Banteng and one Printing Press in Bamenda opened in 1986.⁷² Akoko failed to provide statistics of the number of Cameroonians who are employed by the Full Gospel Mission Church in Cameroon but one can infer from the preceding statistics that in comparison with Winners' Chapel the contributions of the former far outweigh those of the Winners' Chapel because in addition to churches which are the only recruiting organ of the latter, the Full Gospel Mission Church owns other institutions where more Cameroonians are employed. Robert contends that only members of the Full Gospel are employed in their church owned institutions and that it the prosperity gospel has motivated the Pentecostals to engage in various business sectors so as to overcome the full impact of the economic crisis that hit Cameroon in the 1990s.⁷³ The question to ask at this point is therefore: Why has Winners' Chapel not invested in other social institutions apart from churches in Cameroon?

⁷² Akoko, *Ask and You Shall Be Given*, 62-62.

⁷³ Ibid.

6.5. The Ambivalent Character of Social Capital/Remittances in Intra-African Pentecostalism

The absence of other social institutions apart from the few churches owned by Winners' Chapel in Cameroon has been a contentious issue among Cameroonians and raises questions, especially because in Nigeria the church owns a variety of other investments, described as a 'conglomerate of Nursery, Primary, Secondary Schools and Universities'.⁷⁴ These schools are found all over Nigeria⁷⁵ and are important because in addition to providing employment to many citizens they complement the efforts of the Nigerian Federal and State governments in providing education to its citizens. One would expect that as the church moves across international boundaries it would make similar investments as part of its contributions to the social development of the host countries. Such endeavours would add to church-related activities to complete the holistic proclamation of the word of God as evangelical churches often acclaim it. For example, the 'Lausanne Committee Forum for World Evangelization Holistic Mission Issue Group Report of September 2004'⁷⁶ argued that biblical evangelism is inseparable from social responsibility, Christian discipleship, and church renewal.⁷⁷ This perspective seems to be recognised by leaders of Winners' Chapel who seem willing to develop such goals in Cameroon. That is why some Winners' Chapel leaders in Cameroon argue that the church has been making efforts to establish schools but has often been prevented by the Cameroonian government education authorities. Each time they have submitted an

⁷⁴ Williams Rotimi and Elizabeth Omolara Opoola, 'The Church and National Development: A Study of the Living Faith Church (Winners' Chapel) in Nigeria', *Center for Studies on New Religions*, University of Ilorin, Kwara State.

⁷⁵ The first University of Winners' Chapel was created in 2002 and named Covenant University and the Second-Landmark University was created in Omu-Aran, the native town of Bishop Oyedepo in 2010.

⁷⁶ Peter Brierley, 'Evangelicals in the World of the 21st Century', In *Lausanne Committee Forum for World Evangelization, Thailand, Sept 2004*, 6-8.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

application for the opening of a school, the application has been turned down on the pretext that the church needs to be legally registered in Cameroon before it can create other institutions, which will be recognised by the name of the church.⁷⁸ For example, in a recent visit (January 2016) by the Administrator of Winners' Chapel Cameroon to the Prime Minister's office in Yaoundé where the applications are deposited, he was advised that Winners' Chapel documents for authorisation had been received and that the responsible officers were going to look into them as soon as possible and make recommendations to the President of the Republic for possible signing of a decree recognising the church in Cameroon.⁷⁹ According to a Local Council Financial Chairperson of Winners' Chapel in Douala, once the President signs the decree, the church has got plans to build a hospital and University in Cameroon that would serve the whole of Central Africa. Cameroon has been earmarked for these projects because, after Nigeria, Cameroon has the highest number of Winners' Chapel congregations in Africa and is therefore well placed to benefit from such investments.⁸⁰

Leaders of Winners' Chapel bemoan the fact that the Cameroonian state authorities are unwilling to cooperate with them toward their perceived investment plans that would benefit Cameroonians. Some of them even conjecture that the Cameroonian state recognises the contributions of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon but is reluctant to legalise the church and let them carry out other investments because doing so would compel them to recognize other Pentecostal churches in Cameroon which have rather ulterior motives for existing.⁸¹ But evidence suggests that the Cameroonian state authorities may be wary about granting any legal rights for

⁷⁸ Pastor Enoch, Interview (12/10/15), Douala.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Elder Emmanuel Yele, Interview (07/11/15), Douala.

⁸¹ Pastor Peter Toh, Interview (18/01/16), Douala.

Winners' Chapel to exist in Cameroon because they doubt the real motives of the church and how beneficial their existence would be to Cameroonians. At least two problems might account for this suspicion: the first is that none of the Cameroonians working with Winners' Chapel in Cameroon is registered with the *Caisse Nationale de Prevoyance Social* (CNPS).⁸² This means that Cameroonians working with the church will have no pension upon retirement. Last year the matter was reported to the responsible state authorities by an indigenous Cameroonian Winners' Chapel pastor⁸³ and Winners' church administration was asked to submit the names of workers in the church with their respective years of entry. Instead of submitting a list of the over 182 workers of the church, Winners' Chapel national office in Cameroon submitted a list of 78 workers noting that the first worker of the church was employed in 2012,⁸⁴ despite the fact that Cameroonians have been serving the church since 1996 as I noted in the previous chapter.⁸⁵ When one of the pastors was invited to verify the submitted list, it was discovered that the true years of entry and salaries of the workers had been reduced and thus falsified.⁸⁶ Consequently, the Cameroonian pastors Union demanded that the national pastor of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon should explain 'why our (Cameroonian pastors) true years of entry into this commission were not forwarded to CNPS through the Chief of Centre Bonamousadi

⁸² The National Social Insurance Fund (CNPS) ensures, within the framework of the general policy of the Government, the various benefits provided in the legislation of social protection and the family. As such, it covers three branches of social security including: Family Benefits, Old age, invalidity and death pensions/Occupational risks, available at: <http://www.cnps.cm/>: (Accessed 20/12/16).

⁸³ Pastor Paul Menyole, Interview (04/02/16), Douala.

⁸⁴ Ibid; also see, World Mission Agency INC, Winners Chapel International Cameroon. A document containing names/number of Workers of the Winners Chapel in Cameroon, years of entry and their salaries. This is the list with the wrong information a copy of which is with this author, obtained in Douala last February.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Pastor Victor Bong, Interview (02/02/16), Douala. Also see World Mission Agency INC, Winners' Chapel International, Manpower Schedule. A document containing number of workers of the Winners Chapel in Cameroon with their actual years of entry and salaries. Obtained in Douala by the author.

Douala... what happened to those who have been working since 1996?’⁸⁷ The Union also asked to know ‘why workers like Dominic Nanji who has been working in this commission since 1996 is said to have started work in 2012?’⁸⁸

The second issue, which further complicates the situation, is that there have been suggestions in some quarters that Winners’ Chapel has made some important social investments in Cameroon when in reality there appear to be none. According to one informant, pastor Menyole, and other indirect evidence, a letter was written to the Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon by the Nigerian church authorities in Cameroon, stating that the church had built schools, and other social facilities in Cameroon. This had probably been done in order to pacify the Cameroonian state authorities and make them authorise the church since it is currently operating in illegality.⁸⁹ But having found out the existence of this letter, the Cameroonian pastors Union of the World Mission Agency Cameroon further demanded to know from the National Pastor ‘the location where the Centre for the blind, the Orphanage and schools constructed by the World Mission Agency Cameroon were situated as stipulated in the letter addressed to the Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon’.⁹⁰

It is difficult to speculate on the reasons why authorities of Winners’ Chapel would suggest that the church has established facilities in Cameroon, which in fact do not exist. It may be that the church hierarchy did so in order to get authorisation from the Cameroonian government after which they would actually carry out such investments. But if authorities of Winners’ Chapel have indeed resorted to such

⁸⁷ Cameroonian Pastors Union (CPU) WMA-Cameroon: ‘Our Observation and a Call for an Extraordinary General Meeting with all Full-Time Pastors and National Church Committee’ Memo addressed to the National Pastor of Winners Chapel Cameroon, 04/05/2015.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Pastor Paul Menyole, Interview (04/02/16), Douala.

⁹⁰ Cameroonian pastors Union (CPU) WMA-Cameroon: ‘Our Observation and a Call for an Extraordinary General Meeting with all Full-Time pastors and National Church Committee’ Memo addressed to the National Pastor of Winners’ Chapel Cameroon, 04/05/2015.

tactics in order to be legally recognised by the Cameroonian state government,⁹¹ the Cameroon government may well be interpreting the former's dealings and claims as detrimental to the life of its citizens even if they are offering some employment to them. That might explain why the church has not been legally recognised. However, what one notices here is that Winners' Chapel may be content to confine itself in Cameroon to the opening of churches where money would be generated to build other investment projects of the church in Nigeria which it will be easier for the Nigerian leadership to control. Some Cameroonian informants regarded this issue as a matter of power and control as to who will eventually have power to control the investments in Cameroon, the Cameroonians or the Nigerians- who own the church? As one pastor of the church lamented:

We have been fighting on the idea of opening at least one Primary school in this country. We have been asking the Nigerian national pastors who come to this country to apply for authorisation from the government to open schools but they don't listen or simply don't want to do it. At one time we had decided that we were going to ask for authorisation to open a Primary school but in the last meeting we had, the Nigerian pastors who were heading the church said if schools were opened it would be their wives administering them because they cannot have their wives who are graduates come and work under Cameroonians who have been trained as Primary School teachers and obtained basic professional qualifications from Teachers Training Colleges. They vowed that if their wives are not going to be directors of the schools they were not going to open them. But we collect large sums of money each year including all the Shiloh offerings and transfer to Nigeria where they keep building Universities...Universities where we cannot send our children despite that we are pastors of this church because the fee is too high and we cannot afford.⁹²

The frustration expressed by some members and pastors of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon about the perceived deliberate refusal of the Nigerian leaders to open any

⁹¹ One of my respondents suggested that the government of Cameroon might be delaying the recognition of the Winners' Chapel in Cameroon because the church has not established any schools or hospitals. He had advised the national leaders of the church to try and establish at least one Primary School because most of the older mission churches started with such services before opening congregations. My respondent did not in any way justify that they had lied to the government about opening any schools or orphanage because he never knew that I had this information.

⁹² Pastor Lazarus Wah, Interview (02/02/16), Bamenda.

schools in Cameroon unless these are led by their wives or themselves reveals how the concept of power is being teased out within the movement in Cameroon. For the Nigerians, power lies in their hands both in Nigeria and elsewhere. They have established churches in Cameroon probably because churches can easily be linked to the ones in Nigeria and connected to the founder owner. But schools and hospitals could be seen as concrete investment projects in Cameroon which might be difficult to control from outside the country without the active involvement of Cameroonians. But the Nigerians may also believe that Cameroonians are less qualified to lead the former in any sphere of life. These tensions in power relations are currently depriving Cameroon of any more substantial economic benefit that the country might have derived from other investments by Winners' Chapel.

However, the ambivalence of social capital in Winners' Chapel in Cameroon really centres on the question of the direction of flow of resources between Nigeria as the mother church and Cameroon as the daughter church. Afe Adogame has paraphrased Peggy Levitt in his studies of the African Christian diaspora by suggesting that immigrants often bring with them to the host society a set of norms, practices, and varying degrees of social capital which Levitt calls their 'resources'.⁹³ In the course of their lives in the receiving country, immigrants adapt and effect changes in these resources, which, in turn become the content of social remittance sent back to their original home communities.⁹⁴ What Adogame developed from Levitt's concept of remittances was in connection to African immigrants in Europe and the United States and how these African immigrants deal with their resources and remittance issues in relation to their home countries. While this is significantly different from our study of intra-African Pentecostalism in the context of Cameroon,

⁹³ Adogame, *The African Christian Diaspora*, 118.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

the question of remittances and resources remains relevant in both cases. Levitt's concept of social remittances means that 'ideas, behaviours and social capital flow from receiving to sending communities'.⁹⁵ If resources flow from the USA back to Nigeria, then Levitt's model would also lead us to expect a flow from Cameroon back to Nigeria, which is what we find. However, the crucial difference between the two models of remittance is that the USA is the richer partner, whereas Cameroon is a much poorer one, which would manifestly benefit from the transfer of resources in the other direction. From a moral or empowerment perspective the direction of flow should be different, whereas from the point of view of Levitt's argument it should be, and is, precisely the same. In the case of intra-African movements, considerations of economic justice and empowerment would suggest that ideas and resources and behaviours ought to flow from the sending to the receiving countries, in part to promote the ideas and principles that underpin the organisation's *modus operandi* as defined from its place of founding. This would enable such organisations to fully establish themselves in their new contexts.

In the previous chapter, we have noted that Nigerian missionaries are seen by Cameroonians as experts in the word of God over against Cameroonians and are therefore useful in contributing to the spiritual life of the country. In the context of global migration, it is understandable that when immigrants settle into their new contexts they see it as a duty to send money to their friends and relatives in Africa. However, they also contribute to the economy of their receiving countries through the taxes they pay on their income and are liable to other benefits such as pension schemes in these receiving countries. In this case there is a triangular trajectory of benefits where immigrants provide services in the receiving countries for which they

⁹⁵ Ibid.

are rewarded and from which rewards immigrants' family members benefit through remittances. The concept of remittances as a source of social capital is appropriate in the context of immigrants in Europe and the United States but it is questionable whether this same principle can be applied so favourably to organisations such as Winners' Chapel and other APCCs in their intra-continental operations, which are often perceived to empower the receiving countries. The ambivalence of the Pentecostal contributions to social capital in Cameroon is that the flow of resources and remittances between the Nigerian Winners' Chapel mother church and the Cameroonian Winners' Chapel, though admittedly complex, appears to be much more unidirectional in favour of the mother church. The money that is used to pay the workers employed by Winners' Chapel in Cameroon comes from Cameroonians through the tithes and offerings that are collected.⁹⁶ The church in Cameroon also pays all the missionaries that are sent from Nigeria to control the church as national leaders and to lead the more established congregations in Cameroon. We have previously noted that Cameroonians are not registered for social insurance and so have not got any job security. A Finance Committee chairman of one of the most financially buoyant Winners' Chapel congregations in Cameroon reported that up till 2013, Winners' Chapel in Cameroon used to send the balance of all its monetary collections to Nigeria after running its services in Cameroon. From 2013 onwards, only 40 per cent (still a significant percentage) of the total income including all tithes has been sent back to Nigeria.⁹⁷ Antecedents to this same practice in Winners' Chapel abound and indeed, the issue of transnational remittance is not limited to Cameroon.

⁹⁶ Pastor Samuel Anang, Interview (09/11/15), Douala.

⁹⁷ Elder Emmanuel Yele, Interview (07/11/15), Douala.

In 2007, Ukah carried out a study of the Christian Missionary Fellowship and the Winners' Chapel in Cameroon in what he called: "Piety and profit: accounting for money in West African Pentecostalism".⁹⁸ He revealed that Winners' Chapel operates the system of 'remittance ratio', which is the financial quota that is assigned to each congregation to repatriate on a monthly basis to the International headquarters in Nigeria.⁹⁹ The amount of money sent varies from parish to parish and according to financial viability. Ukah also reveals that during the crisis that engulfed Winners' Chapel in Ghana in 2004 the Accra branch was given a target of US\$60,000 to remit to Nigeria each month.¹⁰⁰ Ukah's findings also reveal that Winners' Chapel has a policy of closing down congregations especially in semi-urban areas that fail to meet their remittance ratio and for reasons of unproductivity. In Cameroon, the Douala church has financial oversight function over other Winners' Chapel churches in the country, who pay their remittance ratios to Douala for onward transmission to Nigeria. A church member transfers the money to Nigeria by public transport and not through a bank.¹⁰¹ It is hard to avoid the conclusion that this is in order to conceal the amount of cash flows going out of Cameroon into the Nigerian church. In one occasion, armed robbers on the way stole the money that was being transported to Nigeria and no concerns were raised so as to avoid police intervention.¹⁰² It is again interesting that Winners' Chapel demands that remittances are sent to Nigeria even if the sending countries are thereby indebted. This is true of Cameroon where according to Ukah, the Douala national headquarters of the church procured a bank loan with which to purchase some property of the church and was at the time of Ukah's research repaying the loan to the bank. As a result of this, its

⁹⁸ Ukah, 'Piety and profit', 632.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ukah, 'Piety and profit', 640.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

remittance to the Lagos church was reduced to 10 per cent of total income.¹⁰³ My findings show that the current remittance ratio of Cameroon is 40 per cent, probably because they have finished paying the loan.

One might argue that it is to some extent reasonable that all branches of Winners' Chapel throughout the world should have some financial commitment to the international headquarters in Nigeria in order to support the mission work of the church. However, the current intra-continental remittance practices of the church involving huge sums of money, sometimes coming from countries without permanent Winners' Chapel church buildings, job security, social facilities and with poor working conditions, seems to be problematic. It is for these reasons that it may be suggested that the concept of social capital in Winners' Chapel in Cameroon is a reality only at a rhetorical level.

One has to note that other transnational APCCs are also practising the concept of transnational and intra-continental remittances on a scale that might be similar to that of Winners' Chapel. Adogame provides some statistics concerning this practice in the RCCG that support the argument and are worth mentioning here:

Each individual parish of the Redeemed Christian Church is linked to the Lagos International headquarters, through an evolving hierarchical administrative structure. At the central organizational level, local parishes are required to make monthly financial contributions through administrative, zonal headquarters to RCCG International headquarters. This includes 10 per cent of total tithes and offerings of all RCCG fellowships, 30 per cent of Tithes and 10 per cent of offerings of all parishes dedicated by the General Overseer or not.¹⁰⁴

Adogame concludes that the funds accumulating at the RCCG headquarters are used to assist new, young or weak parishes that may need financial assistance. What one notices here is something of a general trend within APCCs, and the overarching

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 119.

question would be in what ways are these practices helping to empower the host communities where these churches have spread from their originating home countries. What emerges from the experience of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon is that the very Cameroonians whom the church purports to empower are rather faced with the prospect of disempowerment. However, the next section will argue that some gifted Cameroonians have realized these disempowerment tendencies and are paradoxically using Winners' Chapel as a springboard toward creating their own independent ministries and thus empowering themselves.

6.6. When Disempowerment Leads to Empowerment in Pentecostalism

There are at least three independent APCCs in Cameroon that have been founded and are 'owned' and led by former pastors of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon: The Gospel of Power Chapel, Harvest Bible Chapel and Ambassadors of Christ, founded by pastors Greenfield Nchia, Ebua Kum and Tebah John respectively. These churches were all created in 2014 and are located in Douala. All three pastors trained in WOFBI after which they served in several capacities in the church in Cameroon and elsewhere before deciding to open their own churches. A brief survey of their profiles as presented by the pastors during interviews will be helpful in understanding their pathway to independency.

Pastor Greenfield Nchia was a former member of the PCC who claims that he gave his life to Christ in 2001¹⁰⁵ through the inspiration of one Pastor Song who was running a campus ministry in Buea. At the time, Greenfield was studying for a Bachelor's Degree in Pharmacy. Greenfield joined Winners' Chapel in 2002 and in

¹⁰⁵ My research findings suggest that most people who join Pentecostal/Charismatic churches from historic mission churches often have a conversion narrative professing that they were never born again in the former churches, or had not given their lives to Christ. That is to say even though they attended church in those former years, they were never fully committed or had not received the 'Baptism of the Holy Spirit'.

2008 was enlisted as a full-time pastor of the Winners' Chapel after which he travelled to Lagos for WOFBI studies and in 2009 was ordained full-time pastor of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. Greenfield planted churches in Limbe and Tiko, and served as overseer of Winners' Chapel in the northern regions of Cameroon. He also served in Chad as a missionary and then Bonaberi in Douala where he raised the young church from about 200 to 800 members before he was abruptly transferred to Bafoussam and replaced by a Nigerian missionary. Greenfield claims that his transfer to Bafoussam was a sign from God that his time with Winners' Chapel had come to an end. First, he believes that he was transferred from Bonaberi because he had grown the congregation to a reasonable size with a corresponding increase in financial contributions, and as a result the Nigerian leadership preferred a Nigerian missionary to reap the fruits instead of him (Greenfield). His replacement by Pastor Victor Hill, a Nigerian missionary seemed to him revealing; he thought that with this attitude there was no future for Cameroonians in the church. Secondly, after Greenfield's first service on Sunday 16th June 2013 almost all Pentecostal churches in Bafoussam were closed by the police authorities on order of the government the next day, including Winners' Chapel.¹⁰⁶ This period of enforced closure of Pentecostal churches went on for the next six months. During this time, he organised the church into two assigned groups where the church members met regularly for worship. On Sundays, he would visit groups intermittently at 8:30am and 10am. However, he started asking God why all these things were happening to him at this time: He had been unjustly transferred from Bonaberi and upon his arrival in Bafoussam, the churches had been closed. According to Greenfield, 'these circumstances were calling my attention to seek the face of God about the next phase

¹⁰⁶ Pastor Greenfield Nchia, Interview (10/12/15), Douala; Ivo Tapang Tanku, 'Cameroon's President Orders Pentecostal Churches Closed', *CNN News updated*, 15/08/15, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/14/world/africa/cameroon-churches>: (Accessed 13/12/16).

of my career and when I sought God's face in prayer and fasting, he revealed that my journey with Winners' Chapel had ended'.¹⁰⁷ Greenfield then spoke to the National Pastor of the church who did not resist his exit from the church in any way but simply consulted with the executive secretary of the church in Nigeria and gave him permission to leave the church. A few weeks later, Greenfield started his own church, dubbed the Gospel of Power Chapel International, Douala. He had left the church because of what he saw as injustice in Winners' Chapel in Cameroon.¹⁰⁸ Instead of being empowered by the church he thought he was serving so fervently, Greenfield rather felt disempowered.

The story of Pastor Ebuu Kum's exit from Winners' Chapel is similar but also different significantly. Kum was converted to born-again Christianity in Nigeria through Abundant Life Faith Ministries, Akwaibom in 1994 while he was studying for a Bachelor's Degree in Biomedical Sciences at the University of Kaduna. Upon return to Cameroon in 1996 he joined Winners' Chapel and after three days of intensive prayer and fasting about his future at the Unification Stadium in Douala, he accepted the call to ministry. In the year 2000 he was granted a WOFBI scholarship to study in Nigeria for one year and was later ordained as a full-time pastor of Winners' Chapel in 2002. Kum has served Winners' Chapel as pastor in Northern Nigeria-Kebie near Sokoto, as a missionary in the Democratic Republic of Congo in Mombasa. In Cameroon, he served in Yaoundé and Buea and was later sent back to Congo Kinshasa as assistant pastor and then to Nfouda-Yaoundé the second time where he moved the church to the current permanent side in 2009. Pastor Kum had been sent back to Cameroon because the church claimed that it wanted to indigenise its churches across the nations of Africa for local leadership. This was a welcome

¹⁰⁷ Pastor Greenfield Nchia, Interview (10/12/15), Douala.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

initiative because Kum believed that this would enable him to settle his family and make the children go to school in a more consistent manner. But after a few months in Cameroon, he was asked to go back to Congo Kinshasa for a third time. Even though he was not happy about this news, he felt it was a test of his faith and so returned to Congo Kinshasa by the end of 2009. While there, Pastor Kum started sensing the call to move away from the church because of the inconsistencies of the movement and other problems he saw within the church. However, he decided to do so by taking a study leave that would enable him seek other prospects of learning, pastoring and leadership. In 2010 he was admitted to Liberty Theological Seminary in Chicago and Winners' Chapel granted him a study leave to pursue a two-year Master's Degree in church planting and leadership. His intention was to return to Cameroon and plant his own church because he was fed up with the practices in Winners' Chapel. The frequent transfers meant that the education of his children was inconsistent and moreover Cameroonian employees of Winners' Chapel were not registered with CNPS and so did not have any job security nor retirement benefits. However, he encountered some leaders of the Harvest Bible Fellowship at Liberty Theological Seminary who had come to deliver lectures on church planting in his school. Pastor Kum approached them after their lectures and enquired whether they would be willing to establish partner branches of their church in Cameroon. On their acceptance, Kum linked up with them and returned to Cameroon to establish a branch of the church on 1st October 2012. The church therefore belongs to a fellowship of churches called Harvest Bible Fellowship with over 156 churches across the world; the headquarters is in Chicago. Pastor Ebu Kum claims that he has nothing to do with the ministry of Bishop Oyedepo because it is a church that presents the gospel in a completely different way and has thus perverted the true and selfless gospel of Jesus Christ into selfish pursuits. He also believes that Winners'

Chapel has very limited opportunities for Cameroonian indigenes working in the church.¹⁰⁹

Pastor Tebah John is a former Presbyterian who claims to have been born again on 14th March 1993 through contact with a breakaway Charismatic Renewal Ministry from the Roman Catholic Church while he was studying in Nigeria. Tebah claims that it was preaching of the ‘Full Gospel’¹¹⁰ that attracted him to this charismatic church and led to his conversion. He joined Winners’ Chapel in 1999 where he served as Usher, Youth Leader, Marriage Committee Chairman and Deacon. When Winners’ Chapel first expanded from Ndogbong to Bonaberi in 2002, Pastor Tebah was privileged to host the church for several months in his house before they could find a rented accommodation. In 2010 he was ordained and thereafter served as assistant pastor under Pastors Wisdom from Nigeria and Greenfield Nchia (Cameroonian) mentioned above. Pastor Tebah claims that his call to ministry came on the 25th April 2012 at 17:05 while he was driving to church for a prayer meeting. He records that God said to him ‘my son I want to talk to you, get a pen and a paper and write this down... my word is living and I am sending you as my ambassador to take and proclaim liberty to the captives’. God further commanded him not to take any action at that moment but to stay on in Winners’ Chapel for adequate preparation for the task ahead. It was not until January 2014, two years after the mandate had been delivered to him, that God revealed to him it was time to undertake his mission to the world. Tebah contacted his pastor at the time, Victor Hill of Winners’ Chapel Bonaberi-about the revelation and later also contacted Pastor Dominion, the National Pastor. Victor Hill and Dominion together gave Tebah

¹⁰⁹ Pastor Titus Ngah, Interview (02/02/16), Douala.

¹¹⁰ This is in reference to the classic Pentecostal formulation of the four-fold Gospel of Jesus Christ as Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King.

their blessings on behalf of Winners' Chapel before sending him off to begin his own ministry. Tebah recalls that he established his church at a time when the Cameroonian state authorities were closing down churches and were unwilling to grant any permission for the opening of new Pentecostal churches. Despite this strict control by the state authorities he was still able to establish his church, which he believes, is an affirmation of his ministry. His parting gift from Winners' Chapel further affirms his calling to ministry. It was a book written by one of his favourite pastors, Dr Enenche entitled: *Making Full Proof of Ministry*. Tebah believes that by donating this book to him, Pastor Dominion was also affirming the call, which he had received from God and had shown that Winners' Chapel was willing to keep the connections with Pastor Tebah while the latter ran his own independent ministry.¹¹¹

Pastor Tebah claims that he had never thought of becoming a pastor until he joined Winners' Chapel and started serving in different 'Units' of the church in what is often called Kingdom service. Kingdom service, according to Bishop Oyedepo, is giving your time and talents and money to the work of the church, which in turn yields rewards. Oyedepo quotes scripture to suggest that 'our labour in the Kingdom is what determines our wages here on earth and Kingdom service is a vital key to supernatural blessings.'¹¹² 'And you shall serve the Lord your God and he shall bless your bread and water' (Exodus 23:25-27).¹¹³ Tebah sees his success in life and ministry as a result of Kingdom service in Winners' Chapel and believes that this is the message that the world needs to hear for people's destinies to be delivered to them. He strongly believes that the teachings in Winners' Chapel provided the bedrock for his thinking about ministry. Even though the Ambassadors of Christ is

¹¹¹ Pastor Tebah John, Interview (12/11/15), Douala.

¹¹² Oyedepo, *The Mandate*, 156.

¹¹³ Ibid.

an independent church with full autonomous control, Pastor Tebah still connects with Bishop Oyedepo through Oyedepo's books and by watching his programmes on YouTube or the satellite and considers Oyedepo as his mentor.¹¹⁴

This section has recounted the narratives of three former pastors of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon who now own independent ministries. We have seen how their time with the Winners' Chapel provoked and motivated them to establish their own ministries. Pastors Greenfield Nchia and Ebua Kum left Winners' Chapel because of what they perceived as the unjust treatment of Cameroonians in a system where Nigerians wield so much power and make some very uncomfortable decisions in the former's home country. They also felt insecure working in a system, which did not care about their future retirement benefits since the church had not registered Cameroonians with the CNPS. What one learns from this is that even though Cameroonians have been empowered by Winners' Chapel as pastors, they sometimes feel powerless in the system because of the hegemony of Nigerian missionaries. They now seek to empower themselves not by fighting with the missionaries and church leadership but by creating their own space where they will not be subordinates but leaders. In this case, one might say that the tendency to disempower people could in some cases paradoxically lead to their empowerment. But the importance of the argument stretches beyond the fact that these Cameroonians now have their own independent ministries. It significantly suggests that their ministries have added to the number of existing churches in Cameroon. Apart from spiritual nurture, they will also provide additional jobs to some Cameroonians. However, Pastor Tebah has a different perspective because he sees himself as being called out from Winners' Chapel for a special mission in much the same way as Bishop

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

Oyedepo who claims to have been called by God to fulfil a specific task, whilst Pastor Kum now has little or nothing to do with the ministry of Bishop Oyedepo after his exit from Winners' Chapel, Pastors Tebah and Greenfield are still happy to connect with Oyedepo's ministry and recognise him as their spiritual father and mentor while operating their ministries independently. There is here a suggestion of both proliferation and splintering within the Winners' Chapel in Cameroon.

One of the characteristics of APCCs is their pathological tendency to proliferate in new host territories because of their evangelistic and missionary endeavours to win whole nations for Christ. This would mean that the various branches pay allegiance to a recognised authority, which defines policy and engineers change. However, there is now considerable evidence to show that APCCs do not only proliferate but also increasingly splinter into breakaway factions, which may maintain the practices of their former churches but run their groups as independent entities from their previous groups. The three churches mentioned above may be regarded as splinter groups but the fact that Ambassadors of Christ and Gospel of Power Chapel still use the ideas of Bishop Oyedepo in their ministries may suggest that these belong to the category of proliferation in which Oyedepo's ideas are increasingly being popularised. Pastor Ebuja Kum's Harvest Chapel, on the other hand, should not be categorised as a splinter group because it does not associate with Winners' Chapel any longer. It should be noted that all three pastors mentioned trained in David Oyedepo's WOFBI. Furthermore, despite the fact that Pastor Kum had furthered his studies in the United States, we need to recognise that his initial Bible training came from Winners' Chapel. One might therefore argue that this initial empowerment has provided the foundation on which the above named pastors have been able to build their own independent ministries. Paul Gifford was right when he

argued that the proliferation of APCCs might be due to over-production of pastors from Pentecostal Bible Schools. Gifford intimated that charismatic churches are preoccupied with establishing their own Bible schools even before building a church. In the process they train so many pastors who after their course of study also form their own congregations and add to the already exploding church market.¹¹⁵ Gifford's suggestion clearly describes the mode of operation of Winners' Chapel as we saw in chapter four where the church started in Cameroon as a Bible School before beginning to establish congregations. The prominence of the Bible School in Cameroon cannot be underestimated. But after twenty years of existence in Cameroon, the Winners' Chapel can boast only a few permanent church buildings in the country. However, whether the independent ministries created from Winners' Chapel by former pastors of the church who have trained in WOFBI are linked to Winners' Chapel or not, the multiplier effect of Winners' Chapel and its Bible School has significantly empowered individuals and provided additional opportunities for the employment of more Cameroonians.

6.7. Conclusion

This chapter has uncovered significant evidence which suggests that the establishment of the Winners' Chapel in Cameroon is benefitting Cameroonians. We have seen how the church provides humanitarian services to the Cameroonian civil society such as welfare services, material and financial support to its members, donations of food item and clothing to people who are dispossessed of their homeland because of war, the provision of drinking water, and the promotion of physical health and employment. The church also provides direct employment to Cameroonians in the various departments of the church such as pastors, cleaners and

¹¹⁵ Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role*, 258.

office secretaries. We also saw how the church through its teachings and values is reconstructing the lives of its adherents so that some are ‘making a complete break with their past’ sinful lives and by that saving the money they formerly wasted in useless pursuits. Others have been empowered through the teachings of the church to create their own jobs. While some of these benefits are serving as forms of empowerment or social capital, others are actually providing Cameroonians with the impetus toward independent agency. The chapter has argued that in this case the whole concept of empowerment is controversial and problematic when we consider that Cameroonians in Cameroon generate all the resources that are used in the church. The money that is used to pay salaries both for Cameroonian indigenous pastors and the Nigerian missionaries is generated in Cameroon. In addition the church sends substantial sums of money back to Nigeria and has not been able to invest in any social facilities in Cameroon for the benefit of Cameroonians. While these judgments may actually seem as a means to disempower Cameroonians, the final section of the chapter suggests that some pastors of Winners’ Chapel may be paradoxically using the church as a springboard to begin their own independent ministry, selecting what they find as biblically acceptable and rejecting what they find constricting in Winners’ Chapel.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

In this study, I have provided historiographical and empirical data on the emergence of Winners' Chapel in order to investigate the reasons for the establishment and proliferation of the church in Cameroon. I have examined the intra-African missionary praxis of a highly influential Nigerian Pentecostal Charismatic Church, Winners' Chapel and its contemporary power dynamics in Cameroon.

The claim of this study to significance lies in its title. By studying African Pentecostalism from an intra-African perspective, I have departed from the general practice of contemporary studies, which mostly explain the intercontinental movements of APCCs to Europe in the context of a reverse mission. This study reveals that, according to some Pentecostal Charismatic church leaders, if Europe is facing a decline in organised Christianity, Africa is facing a problem of powerless Christianity. In this understanding, while APCCs are establishing themselves in the European diaspora in order to re-Christianise the continent, they are moving within the continent of Africa to revive the existing churches and empower them with a problem-solving Christianity.

The second claim to significance of the study is that issues of power and influence have underpinned the intra-African movement of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. Through the various findings, the study provides a significant and original contribution to the understanding of how power dynamics can operate within complex relationships between transnational Pentecostal/Charismatic actors (missionaries) and their receiving country colleagues in Africa. It also contributes more generally to the literature on African Pentecostalism while offering fresh insights into the encounters,

contestations, and resistance that emerge between ‘founder-owners’ and recruited workers of intra-African APCCs. By showing how transnational religious movements negotiate issues of power through missionaries, and the contestations, loyalty and resistance that emerge, the research has the potential to enhance current perceptions about the socio-cultural contexts in which the interplay between migration, mission and power operate within the continent of Africa.

Finally, this study has uncovered significant evidence, which suggests that issues of development and empowerment within APCCs in their cross-border operations in Africa can be ambivalent and controversial. In the case of Winners’ Chapel, the church in Cameroon may be acting as one of the external arms that the Nigerian mother branch uses to generate money and other resources to sponsor the operations of the church in Nigeria. This perspective is an important contribution with new insights concerning the study of APCCs within the sociology of religions and world Christianity, especially in the area of transnationalism.

Some scholars have presented an optimistic view that the vitality and diversity of Christianities in Africa hold great promise for world Christianity especially because of the sending of missionaries by some African founded churches to stem the tide of apostasy in European former heartlands of Christianity.¹ However, other scholars such as Ukah have maintained that the appropriation of free market practices by some religious groups, such as business strategies, excessive recruitment of funds, display of scandalous wealth by the leaders, and increase instances of clergy wrongdoing, are signals of an uncertain future for many individuals and groups of Christians in Africa.²

¹ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

² Asonzeh F. K. Ukah, *African Christianities: Features, Promises and Problems* (Johannes, Gutenberg-Universität: Mianz 2007), 18.

This critique might too easily ignore some of the real motives and engagements of APCCs including the spiritual empowerment and other developmental benefits that they offer their adherents. However, it shows how powerful APCCs have become in influencing the social and economic life of societies for better and for worse. No wonder, Asonzeh Ukah has concluded that, such negative developments are tainting the ‘transforming power of an otherwise socially and economically visible strong religion’.³

This study has examined a Nigerian Pentecostal Charismatic Church and its intra-African power dynamics in Cameroon. A reverse perspective might be illuminating in which scholars interrogate the dynamics of power of a Cameroonian-founded church such as the Christian Missionary Fellowship International that has established branches in Nigeria. Another area for future research would be to investigate to what extent nation states become involved in practices of APCCs that have come from elsewhere and are operating in the former’s territories. Another important issue is that this research has centred on Pentecostal/Charismatic churches; more research needs to be done on other Christian groups such as historic mission denominations in order to chart the pattern of religious transnationalism and power in their missionary engagements. Such a perspective would arguably complement works of scholars such as Emma Wild-Wood’s *Migration and Christian Identity in Congo (DRC)*.⁴ Wild-wood’s study of the Anglican church of Congo was about issues of identity in mission and migration and the complex interaction between the social and religious change occurring in the expansion of the church and how migration alters religious identity.⁵ Another important area of studies would be to investigate the

³ Ibid.

⁴ Emma Wild-Wood, *Migration and Christian Identity in Congo (DRC)* (Boston: Brill), 2008.

⁵ Ibid, 1.

specific relationships and interactions that may be on going between APCCs that were established in Nigeria and have spread into Cameroon and those that were founded by Cameroonians in Cameroon.

The conclusions of this study may be encapsulated in three key words - power, acquiescence, resistance and a phrase: the development rhetoric in intra-African Pentecostalism. *Power* in this context refers to the influence of Nigerian Winners' Chapel missionaries who see themselves as indispensable in the work of the church in Cameroon and have sometimes treated Cameroonians as their subordinates in very unjust ways. However, the thesis is not just about the desire of Nigerian Winners' Chapel for control for its own sake, it is also about a particular understanding of spiritual power, and how that is to be transmitted and preserved. But the hegemony of Nigerian missionaries in Cameroon is subtle; the Nigerian leadership insinuates that Cameroonians are not capable of preparing their own sermons and that Nigerian testimonies are appropriate examples for Cameroonians to follow in order to seek their own miracles. But even subtler is the evidence, which suggests that Nigerian testimonies are used to encourage Cameroonians to donate money for the building of Oyedepo's empire in Nigeria, for that is where power lies and radiates out to the rest of the world. A further element is the power of the electronic media, which ensures that Oyedepo's blessings reach Cameroonians, and keeps their loyalty to the former. However, while Oyedepo wields his power through the media, his missionaries in Cameroon consolidate that power with their presence and influence.

Nigerian missionaries insist that they are in Cameroon in order to take steps toward implementing the vision of Bishop Oyedepo, or to ensure the conservation and preservation of the mandate and vision because without them, there would be no successful transmission of the spiritual power from Oyedepo to his followers in

Cameroon. This reminds us of the crucial relationship in many religious movements between temporal power and actual exercise of control, and the transmission of spiritual power. Western societies tend to separate those two, but many indigenous societies do not separate these two dimensions of power. They believe that one needs to have the right structure for spiritual power to be transmitted and handed on for the benefit of others. ‘Successful’ spiritual power depends on the establishment and preservation of structures of authority. An example of such ‘spiritual power for success’ can be found in Garry Trompf’s description of the extraordinary charismatic power found in Oceanian primal religions called *Mana*.⁶ *Mana* is ‘spirit authority’ and in the Melanesian primal religions ‘*mana* went with the totality of power; victory and continued security were pulled off because a mandate of rule was confirmed by the spirit-world’.⁷ So according to this understanding, certain individuals are seen as having *mana* or some unique gifting of the spirit which is to be used for the good of their societies or those they lead. What this means for our purposes is that, for the fulfilment of his mission in Cameroon and other countries, Oyedepo has to ensure that the flow of his *mana* is not inhibited and this needs appropriate structures of temporal power in the form of missionaries, to maintain the *mana* beyond Nigeria, so that his spiritual authority and charismatic efficacy is not watered down. It is not difficult to see a parallel here with the understanding of spiritual power in the Roman Catholic Church, where it is necessary for the bishops to remain in communion with the Vatican and filial obedience to the Pope for the line of apostolic succession to be maintained; if that chain is broken, the channel of apostolic spiritual power is blocked and the religious community concerned ceases to be part of the One Holy and Apostolic Church indwelt by the Spirit of God. In both the Roman Catholic Church and in

⁶ Garry Trompf, ‘Pacific Islands’, in Tony Swain and Garry Trompf, *The Religions of Oceania* (Psychology World Press, 1995), 140.

⁷ *Ibid*, 141.

Winners' Chapel, the unbroken succession of apostolic authority is indispensable to the successful transmission of the power of the Spirit. Here then is the advancement of a spiritual justification for the presence of Winners' Chapel missionaries in Cameroon, which must be seen in the connection between actual power over persons and institutions and the preservation of spiritual power in Cameroon. This type of ecclesiology which develops a connection between spiritual power and temporal power has succeeded in persuading some Cameroonians to believe that in order to get access to the power of the Spirit for success, they have to submit themselves to the authority of this uniquely Spirit-empowered man of God, Bishop Oyedepo. Social scientists would include this particular religious theory in the category of hegemony where the acquiescence of the subject in his or her subjugation comes from the seductiveness of the ideology of the one who has power. Thomas Tweed combined the wisdom of William James and Emile Durkheim in order to argue that religions are simultaneously individualistic and collective. According to his analysis of the Jamesian view of religious life, 'there are people who have an original, powerful religious experience, which then gets communicated through some kind of institution; it gets handed on to others, and they tend to live it in a kind of secondhand way'.⁸ In this study, we have noted that the 'original, powerful religious experience' is located in Nigeria, and then embedded in Nigerian-defined practices and values of Winners' Chapel such as sermons and testimonies, which are transmitted to the church in Cameroon where they are accepted and appropriated for the benefit of the members.

The next key word is *acquiescence*, which explains how some Cameroonians have come to believe through persuasion or the use of what Joseph Nye referred to as 'soft power', implying in this context that Nigerians are more holy than Cameroonians,

⁸ Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), 64.

that they are better preachers and that they are the ones capable of making miracles to happen in Cameroon. This notion has made Cameroonians acquiesce to the leadership of Nigerian missionaries and in some instances take sides against their own Cameroonian compatriots in Cameroon. It is possible to make a connection between this attitude and what Kincheloe *et al* discovered elsewhere when they noted that ‘certain groups in any society ... are privileged over others and, although the reasons for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression that characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable’.⁹ Their thoughts reflect the operation and power dynamics in Winners’ Chapel Cameroon, where the Nigerian leadership through its practices and missionaries wield unreserved power over Cameroonians while Cameroonians have accepted their subordinate position and acquiesce to the latter’s power and tactics. In this context, ‘power is based on the actor’s ability to effectively use material and nonmaterial resources in a specific context, to make his subordinates do things they might not otherwise do and to enforce outcomes suiting his preferences’.¹⁰ Ingie Hovland has recently shown how modern Charismatic churches use tapes, videos, sermons and books to mediate transnational power¹¹ and possibly maintain the allegiance of their transnational branches to the mother church. However, it is possible that when a sufficient number of people start to claim that it is no longer necessary to submit to these authoritarian structures in order to benefit from this power, both the spiritual and temporal power of the powerful begins to break down.

⁹ Joe Kincheloe and Peter McLaren, ‘Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research’, *Ethnography and schools: Qualitative approaches to the study of education* (2002): 87-138.

¹⁰ Robert A. Dahl, ‘The concept of power’, *Behavioral Science* 2, no. 3, (1957): 201-215.

¹¹ Ingie Hovland, ‘Christianity, Place/Space, and Anthropology: Thinking Across Research on Evangelical Place-Making’, *Religion*, 46:3, 331-58.

The third key word is *resistance*, which refers to the manner in which full-time Cameroonian indigenous pastors are resisting the power and influence of missionaries because the former believe that they are competent enough to lead the church in Cameroon and make it a truly Cameroonian church. Cameroonians also desire to be treated fairly and to contribute to the vision and mission of Bishop Oyedepo, even though the church originated from Nigeria. However, the determination by the Nigerian-dominated leadership to countermand any claims to authority and selfhood by Cameroonians and even to refer to the latter as ‘foreigners in their own nation’ reveals how far-reaching the domination of Cameroonians by Nigerians have come. These contestations only remind us of what political scientists have termed ‘relational power’, according to which power is seen as a causal relationship between states in international relations.¹² Their conception of relational power hinges on Max Weber’s notion of power as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance”.¹³ But while some of the pastors are showing their resistance from within the church, others are doing so by resigning from the Winners’ Chapel and opening independent ministries towards their own empowerment. Based on the preceding arguments, one can note that, the understanding of spiritual power and how it is expressed through structures of ecclesial power remains a linchpin for understanding the missionary agenda of intra-African Pentecostal churches.

The phrase, the development or empowerment rhetoric in intra-African Pentecostalism, derives from evidence in the study which suggests that APCCs are charting new territories across the continent in order to spread the word of God and

¹² Pustovitovskij, and Jan-Frederik Kremer, *Structural Power and International Relations Analysis: ‘Fill Your Basket, Get Your Preferences’*, 3. St. Louis: Federal Reserve Bank of St Louis, 2011.

<https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/docview/1697784183?accountid=10673>. 3.

¹³ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: Free Press, 1947).

provide some form of development, social capital or empowerment to the receiving countries. However, the case of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon suggests that the church is actually using the daughter church in Cameroon to raise money for development of the mother church in Nigeria. The relative lack of permanent church buildings, the complete absence of social facilities and the poor working conditions of Cameroonians including the transfer of reasonable sums of money to Nigeria, provide compelling evidence that any prospect of development or the provision of social capital and empowerment by Winners' Chapel in Cameroon lies more in the sphere of rhetoric than reality.

The power dynamics, acquiescence and resistance that are visible in the transnational operation of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon as shown in this study, are discernible in other transnational African Pentecostal churches elsewhere. For example, David Maxwell has used the ZAOGA Pentecostal transnational movement to show how the growth and spread of PCCs increases the roles of the church leaders to give them more power. Maxwell's thesis also reveals how the multiplication of roles in the expansion of transnational APCCs breeds authoritarianism from the hierarchy of the church and resistance from some of its remote branches. According to Maxwell, the leader of ZAOGA-Archbishop Guti has seen a multiplication of his functions to include, apostle, prophet, culture-broker and community leader, roles which fuse, to create what other scholars have described as the Pentecostal big man in Africa's contemporary social landscape. Examples of this African Pentecostal 'big men' include Otabil and Duncan-Williams from Ghana, Nevers Mumba from Zambia and Simeon Kayiwa from Uganda. But Maxwell decisively intimates that the confidence of Pentecostal big men is often conspicuous in the management of their movements' international branches. 'While ZAOGA resists external missionary dominance, it

produces its own authoritarianism as a means to bind a large and unwieldy constituency'.¹⁴ What Maxwell means here is that from the vantage point of Zimbabwe which is the headquarters of ZAOGA and where the administration of the church is situated, the leaders try to control other branches by trying to force local Zimbabwean tenets of the church on its external branches. Maxwell also makes much of the fact that tension exists in the movement between the mother, headquarters church and those that have emerged elsewhere. While the authoritarian church government has been able to wield their influence and power at the centre, around Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, and the eastern Shona areas by promoting their 'sacred history', other branches of the church such as in Mozambique, South Africa and England have been opposed to this distinctive part of ZAOGA'S ideology. These opposition branches regard the influence of ZAOGA leadership as Zimbabwean cultural dominance, even if ZAOGA adherents remain true to the proclamation of the evangelical message.¹⁵ Maxwell's thesis about ZAOGA fits perfectly well into the transnational ambitions and corresponding power, authoritativeness and resistance that have come to define the operations of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon. It is even true to say that the proliferation of Winners' Chapel across the world has also seen a corresponding multiplication of the roles of Bishop Oyedepo. The evidence can be traced to the year 2000 when Bishop Oyedepo announced that his calling into the office of prophet had been confirmed by the Lord on October 4 1981, while he was concluding a five-day time of waiting on God.¹⁶ What has made his assertion intriguing for some commentators is that his claim to prophet hood was made retrospectively in 2000, being applied to when he began his preaching career in 1981.¹⁷ Was it that for the almost twenty years of existence of his

¹⁴ Maxwell, *Gifts of the Spirit*, 218.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ MacTavish, 'Pentecostal Profits', 152; Oyedepo, *The Mandate*, 32.

¹⁷ MacTavish, 'Pentecostal Profits', 152.

church he had not realised that he had been called to the prophetic ministry or was he waiting to announce this development at a later stage?

The status of Prophet seems to be important for leaders of APCCs because it significantly helps them to exert their influence, maintain order in their movements and restrict their members from expressing opinions that are contrary to the ones leaders or prophets promulgate.¹⁸ For example, Bishop Oyedepo consistently remarks that ‘the moment you doubt prophetic utterances, you are damned. When you go against the prophet it is actually God you are rising up against’.¹⁹ The consequences of opposing the prophet could be far reaching, sometimes including death. For example, Oyedepo claims that a group opposed his plan to move the church from its original site in Lagos to its present location at Canaan Land. Two adults in the instigator’s family died in a short space of time, and God later killed the instigator himself in a car accident.²⁰

But prophets also have other outstanding qualities that are beneficial to their adherents. Oyedepo claims that when God reveals something to him, he, as the Prophet, can ‘pronounce it’ and deliver it to the people.²¹ Similarly, Oyedepo claims to possess power to cure people in various ways, either by mere pronouncements or by allowing them touch his garments. As he further comments, ‘One day I was walking through the congregation to the pulpit and a man who had suffered a spinal injury for seventeen years touched my clothes...that was it! He was instantly healed!’²² Oyedepo even claims to possess ‘creative breath’ which he uses through his prophetic utterances, to assist in miracles of healing, the prevention of death, the creation of wealth, and

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ David Oyedepo, *All You Need to Have all Your Needs Met* (Lagos: Dominion Publishing House, 2004), 105-7.

²¹ Ibid.

²² David Oyedepo, *Walking in Dominion* (Lagos: Dominion Publishing House, 2006), 77-9.

selection of a marriage partner.²³ During fieldwork, I learnt that representatives of Oyedepo such as the Nigerian National Pastor of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon carefully promote the supernatural power and uniqueness of the Bishop. For example, the National Pastor claimed that Oyedepo does all transfers of his pastors every two years. Usually, Oyedepo comes up with a comprehensive list of transfers and appointments of his church workers but in some occasions, names that had been previously typed out on the transfer list have disappeared after the Bishop's prayers, because God did not approve that such persons serve where they had been posted.²⁴

When Paul Gifford referred to Africa's contemporary Christianity as 'an enchanted religious imagination',²⁵ he was suggesting that the practices of APCCs exercised an extraordinary magnetic appeal because they had the capacity to influence the lives of the people by pacifying their real life challenges and keeping them hopeful. While this is nevertheless an accurate reflection of how APCCs represent themselves, Gifford's main argument was that this form of Christianity was not capable of providing impetus toward development in Africa. To buttress his point, he related his experience during the Eighth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare in 1998, and showed how helpfully the World Council of Churches (WCC) handled contemporary problems compared with the way the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, a Pentecostal church of Brazilian origin in Harare, did so during the same period. Gifford argued that, 'in the WCC, all the major problems of the world were addressed: third world debt, the rights of women, the rights of minorities, including sexual minorities, intellectual property rights, the plight of child soldiers, the

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Pierre, Interview, Douala.

²⁵ Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity*, 13.

status of Jerusalem, the evils of unrestricted capital flows, global warming'.²⁶ The WCC had conceived evil in structural terms and had allowed its theological reflections to be guided by socio-political and economic realities.²⁷ Gifford's experience with the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God was very different because the issues addressed were not structural but personal: joblessness, homelessness, sickness, childlessness, business failure, and failure to find a spouse.²⁸ In addition, the religious imagination of members of the Universal Kingdom of God was informed by a worldview that sees spirits, demons, and spiritual powers as responsible for every problem in life. Gifford even learned that a certain spirit was said to have put HIV blood in the veins' of one sufferer who was invited by the pastor to be cured. 'Here the remedy for the problem of evil was not structural analysis and political-economic reform; it was diagnosis of the spirit responsible and deliverance or exorcism by the ministers'.²⁹ Afe Adogame lends support to Gifford's view about the perception of evil in APCCs when he speaks of 'spiritual terrorism within and beyond borders: Pentecostalism and ritual emplacement'.³⁰ He argues that 'elaborate rituals in the Winners' Chapel are packaged to handle spiritual terrorist attacks such as sickness, unemployment, social insecurity, death, emotional stress, hunger, poverty, bareness and virtually all of life's vicissitudes'.³¹ Adogame exemplifies his claim with a testimony from one of his respondents obtained during fieldwork in Lagos in the Lagos branch of Winners' Chapel in 2002 as follows:

On the night of December 30 2001, I woke up with a holy anger in me because I was in a bank with nothing to show for it. I told God in a prayer that I want a change and I was led to multiply my present monthly tithe by three. Also, in the month of November, when there was a call for sacrificial

²⁶ Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity*, 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

³⁰ Adogame, *The African Christian Diaspora*, 93.

³¹ *Ibid.*

offering, I gave the whole of my November salary, and then during Shiloh in December, when the call for prayer request was made, I told God that I needed a job in an international oil company, and if not in an oil company, I want it in a reputable bank. To the Glory of God, between Shiloh and now, I've secured a job in an international oil company and two offers from two reputable banks. I give God all the glory.³²

Adogame was showing that members of APCCs were capable of using their faith in God by showing loyalty to the demands of the church through prayer and donations in order to achieve set goals in life, in what Gifford referred to as 'personal terms'. However, Gifford made his argument to suggest that since APCCs conceive of evil only in personal and hardly in structural terms, their perspective was incapable of developing Africa. However, my study shows that APCCs are also struggling to address contemporary socio-economic and political issues in addition to their personal needs. That is why Winners' Chapel provides drinking water and health facilities to some hospitals in Cameroon in addition to healing and deliverance miracles. In Nigeria, Winners' Chapel owns hospitals, schools, banks, universities, and other facilities, which are indicative of the fact that they are promoting developmental schemes. In the light of religious transnationalism, it is important for scholars to investigate to what extent founders of transnational APCCs are willing to promote developmental projects in the new mission fields throughout the world and are actually promoting them, especially in the continent of Africa. This study shows that Bishop Oyedepo appears content to limit himself to the opening of churches in Cameroon while all the developmental projects take place in Nigeria. Consideration should also be taken of the fact that most of the churches in Cameroon operate in rented accommodation while Cameroonians who are employed in the church do not belong to any social benefit scheme. This is not a perspective that is common in the academic study of APCCs.

³² Ibid.

That notwithstanding, the claims to supernatural healings, miracle, breakthroughs and the provision of social capital and empowerment or development by APCCs have sometimes been exaggerated by scholars and used to support slanted arguments. That is why Gifford quoted Isak Niehaus's sympathetic account of the death from AIDS of Isak's research assistant in order to justify his thesis. Isak had remarked that:

In the face of severe crises—failed development, domestic violence, way too many early deaths, and inappropriate coping strategies—silence is a far more serious abuse of intellectual freedom than the revelation of unpalatable truths. The alternatives—selectively reporting on the achievements of (Africa's post-Independence governments), constructing contrived realities about humane sociality (Ubuntu), and ethnographic romanticism—are definitely worse options.³³

Paul Gifford concluded that he was opening a debate about some of the issues that in his opinion had been given little attention in studies on African Pentecostalism.³⁴ The distinctive contribution that this thesis has added to Gifford's debate is its unveiling of the close nexus between spiritual and temporal power and its contention that the politics of power, empowerment and social capital in Pentecostal missionary praxis in Africa is frequently deeply ambivalent. In the case of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon, the evidence uncovered by this research suggests that Pentecostal claims to empowerment and the provision of social capital are more rhetorical than real. The dynamics of Winners Chapel power in Cameroon reveal that whereas the church from Nigeria claims to empower Cameroonians, the latter in reality feel disempowered and even marginalised in their home country. In this scheme of things, the power of authority deriving from the Nigerian leaders and owners of the church clashes with the

³³ Isak Niehaus, *Witchcraft and a Life in the New South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the International Africa Institute, 2013), 26, quoted in Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*, 1.

³⁴ Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*, 2.

power of resistance from some Cameroonian indigenous pastors of the church in Cameroon.

Scholars of religion and world Christianity have suggested that the rise of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, for example, is intended to produce a parallel, purer and more ethical society.³⁵ Transnationally, these movements are criss-crossing the African continent with the gospel of salvation, drawing in everybody who wants to join them and to expand their churches and sometimes employing indigenous workers to meet their missionary agendas. While these engagements remain helpful for the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the salvation of people, some of the practices of intra-African Pentecostalism noted in this study suggest that certain elements of institutional power are skilfully utilising globalisation to create global religious empires. Andrew Walls made a prediction which was both pessimistic and optimistic, about twenty-first century African Christianity. He argued that ‘the Christianity typical of the twenty-first century will be shaped by the events and processes that take place in the southern continents, and above all by those that take place in Africa... The things by which people recognise and judge Christianity will (for good or ill) increasingly be determined in Africa’.³⁶ This balanced view of the influence of African Christianity for good or ill needs to be given attention in contemporary scholarship in World Christianity. But if Andrew Walls visualised African Christianity as having the potential to define World Christianity in the twenty-first century, other scholars have singled out Nigeria as a hub for the new worldwide religious resurgence and as the engine that would transform Africa into a theatre for World Christianity and make its impact across the globe. There is no wonder, then, that Nigerian PCCs are using this argument to penetrate the continent of Africa, sometimes bringing with them their

³⁵ Knibbe, ‘We did not come here as Tenants, but as Landlords’, 133-158.

³⁶ Andrew Walls, ‘Africa in Christian History: Retrospect and Prospect’, *Journal of African Christian Thought* 1, no. 1 (June 1998): 2.

cultures, practices and values and, according to my research, implying that they are essential for the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ both in Nigeria and elsewhere. Abraham Akrong has referred to ‘the fabrication of an imperial theology based on an exclusive and a narrow interpretation of the Judeo-Christian concept of covenant’.³⁷ He was suggesting that ‘a narrow interpretation of the covenant and election had allowed Western Christendom to develop the idea that it has been elected to spread Christianity and civilise the rest of the world ... this imperial theology for empire building, he argued, led to ‘the mutation and transformation of theological concepts into ideological categories for political domination.’³⁸ The result was the ‘domestication’ of God’s covenant of grace, the ‘politicisation’ of evangelism, and the ‘imperialisation of the symbols of Christ.’³⁹ Akrong’s warning of the dangers of imperial theology remains apposite.

The intra-African movement of Winners’ Chapel into Cameroon and its power dynamics, involving encounters between Winners’ Chapel missionaries and Cameroonian pastors is not necessarily one in which theological interpretations are being articulated to give the one power over the other. However, what this study has uncovered is that Nigerian missionaries to Cameroon see themselves as expatriates who are indispensable in the accomplishment of God’s mission in Cameroon. The alleged indispensability of particular religious movements in the accomplishment of God’s mission elsewhere hinges on the issue of domination, which reminds us of earlier warnings of a similar ideology and its consequences. For example, in September 2003, the Hirschluch Conference Centre near Berlin hosted the third international, interdisciplinary Conference of the African Christian Diaspora in Europe.

³⁷ Abraham Akrong, ‘Deconstructing Colonial Mission-New Missiological Perspectives in African Christianity’, in Adogame, Gerloff, and Hock (eds.) *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora*, 65.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

The Conference revisited some of the intended and unintended consequences of the partition of Africa following the 1884 Berlin Conference.⁴⁰ One of the most poignant issues that emerged in the debates was the argument that the 1884 event was based on an ideology of supremacy with far-reaching implications for humanity: issues of human rights, social justice, politics, economics and Christian mission in an era of globalisation were all implicated in the argument.⁴¹ The partition of Africa and its consequences serves as a warning to Western powers because the partition had been caused by a certain ideological worldview in which Europeans had a superior estimation of themselves over the Africans. However, the emergence of new religious movements such as APCCs mostly from Nigeria with their intentions to conquer Africa for Christ could too easily be linked to such superiority complexes, but this time from an intra-African perspective. This is an even more crucial consideration because APCCs have been regarded as a new form of Christian movement that provides answers to the questions of daily life and are capable of transforming the lives of their adherents here and there. While these movements are increasingly crossing the African continent and elsewhere in order to carry out the mission agendas which they define for themselves, commentators need to investigate how their interactions with colleagues of the receiving nations are negotiated and how best the new religious movements are able to provide significant material benefits to their new 'mission fields' and remain independent of national politics.

The significant success of Bishop Oyedepo's ministry and his Winners' Chapel needs to be understood within his claim to divine authorisation and supernatural powers which his followers affirm and are keen to benefit from. They would follow his

⁴⁰ Afe Adogame, 'Conference Report: The Berlin-Congo Conference 1884: The Partition of Africa and Implications for Christian Mission Today', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34, no. 1 (2004): 186-90.

⁴¹ Ibid.

leadership in order to benefit from his spiritual powers. This is what Peter Blau meant when he spoke of the values that legitimate charismatic authority when he interpreted Weber by defining:

A leader and his mission as being inspired by divine or supernatural powers. The leader, in effect, heads a new social movement, and his followers and disciples are converts to a new cause. There is a sense of being "called" to spread the new gospel, a sense of rejecting the past and heralding the future. Devotion to the leader and the conviction that his pronouncements embody the spirit and ideals of the movement are the source of the group's willing obedience to his commands.⁴²

This thesis has argued that the success of Winners' Chapel in its intra-African power dynamics is largely because of the understanding among his adherents that Oyedepo is a spiritual giant who is capable of delivering their destinies into their hands either directly in Nigeria or through the use of temporal power structures that enable the successful transmission of such spiritual powers to them elsewhere.

⁴² Peter Blau, 'Critical Remarks on Weber's Theory of Authority', 131.

Appendix A

Draft Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Intra-African Pentecostalism and the Dynamics of Power: The Living Faith Church Worldwide (Winners' Chapel International) in Cameroon, 1996-2016.

Would you please kindly provide the following information for statistical purposes?

Personal Data

1. Age.....
2. Gender.....
3. Place of residence.....
4. Profession.....
5. Marital Status.....
6. Number of Children (if applicable)

Church Information

1. What branch (City) of the Winners' Chapel in Cameroon do you belong to?
2. How long have you been a member of the Winners' Chapel?
3. Do you hold any position in the church?
4. Were you in a different church before joining Winners'?
5. If yes, in which denomination?
6. If no, what was your religion?
7. How did you get to know and join the Winners' Chapel?

Interview Question Guide

1. History of Emergence of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon

- a) What do you think are some of the reasons that led to the beginning of the Winners' Chapel in Cameroon?
- b) Do you know any of those who started the church in Cameroon both Nigerians and Cameroonians?
- c) In which city in Cameroon did the church first begin?
- d) What in your opinion led to the spread of the church in Cameroon from Douala to other cities and regions?

- e) Do you know any particular methods that are used by the church to start a church in a new city?
- f) What in your opinion are some of the reasons that have led to the growth of the church in Cameroon?
- g) What specific roles do you think the Winners' Chapel in Nigeria have played for the establishment of the church in Cameroon? And how do you think Cameroonians have been helpful for the establishment of the church in Cameroon?

2. The Dynamics of Power in Winners' Chapel in Cameroon

- a) What in your opinion are some of the ways in which the Nigerian Winners' Chapel mother church may be assisting to lead the Cameroonian Winners' Chapel daughter church in Cameroon?
- b) How often do you have people coming from Nigeria to visit the church in Cameroon or for other reasons?
- c) Are there any permanent workers from Nigeria working in Winners' Chapel in Cameroon? If yes, who are these persons and what are their functions?
- d) What in your opinion are some of the advantages and disadvantages of having Nigerian Winners' Chapel Pastors or missionaries in Cameroon?
- e) What are some of the resources that are being sent from Nigeria in order to help sustain the church in Cameroon?
- f) What in your opinion is special about the Winners' Chapel when compared to other Pentecostal Charismatic Churches as far as sermons and testimonies are concerned?
- g) How important is the media in Winners' Chapel and what are some the ways in which media is used? Can you name some special events when media is used and briefly describe how important this is for your Christian life?
- h) Do you in any way maintain, negotiate or rekindle your faith through the media as operated in the Winners' Chapel?
- i) Do you know any Cameroonians who are in key leadership positions of the church in Cameroon? What are their names and the offices they hold?
- j) What is your general impression about churches that are founded in Nigeria and are now spreading in Cameroon? What do you think is the difference between Nigerian Pentecostal Pastors and their colleagues in Cameroon?

3. Empowerment and Social Capital of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon

- a) What are some of the ways in which the Winners' Chapel is useful to its members in Cameroon?
- b) In what ways do you think the church is contributing to the social and economic life of Cameroonians in the communities where they have churches?
- c) Does the Winners' Chapel have any social facilities in Cameroon such as schools, hospitals, and orphanages? If yes, which ones and where are these located? If no, do you think there are any reasons why they don't yet have such in Cameroon?
- d) How do you finance your church in Cameroon? I) Through Tithes and offerings ii) from funds from Nigeria? If you receive funds from Nigeria for running your church what percentage of your total income come from Nigeria?
- e) Do you send any money as remittance offering to Nigeria? If yes what percentage of your total income do you send to Nigeria?
- f) What do you think is the overall importance of Winners' Chapel in Cameroon?
- g) Can you kindly comment about the movement of churches and pastors from Nigeria to Cameroon?

Principal Researcher: Amos B. Chewachong

Appendix B: List of Informants

Pseudonym	Age	Church Position	Place/Loc ation	Sex
Cyprian Kum	45-50	Assistant Pastor	Douala	Male
Victor Bong	35-40	Pastor	Douala	Male
Mathias Fung	45-50	Pastor	Douala	Male
Collins Bua	40-45	Pastor/WOFBI Coordinator	Douala	Male
Mathew Fing	35-40	Pastor/Accountant	Douala	Male
Divine Bah	35-40	Pastor	Douala	Male
Tobias Buh	50-55	Pastor/Nigerian Missionary	Douala	Male
Elias Che	50-55	Pastor	Douala	Male
Samuel Anang	45-50	Assistant Pastor/Leader of Believers Foundation Class	Douala	Male

Peter Toh	50-55	Pastor/Church Administrator	Douala	Male
Paul Menyole	50-55	Pastor	Douala	Male
Titus Ngah	45-50	Pastor	Douala	Male
George Wirdze	35-40	Pastor	Douala	Male
Pierre Mua	50-55	Pastor/Nigerian Missionary	Douala	Male
Silas Yong	35-40	Assistant Pastor	Douala	Male
Emmanuel Yele	50-55	Elder/Local Finance Chairperson	Douala	Male
Jeremiah Bah	50-55	Elder/Evangelism Leader	Douala	Male
Isaiah Lah	35-40	Elder/Local Finance Chairperson	Douala	Male
Barbara Ako	25-30	Deaconess /Interpreter	Douala	Female
Mercy Wah	25-30	Deaconess/Leader, Satellite Fellowship	Douala	Female
Joseph Wah	45-50	Pastor/Nigerian Missionary	Buea	Male
Peter Amah	40-45	Pastor	Buea	Male
Job Molewe	40-45	Pastor	Buea	Male
Theresa Yong	40-45	Deaconess	Buea	Female
Clementine Ning	25-30	Deaconess	Buea	Female
Pandora Wung	30-35	Member	Buea	Female
Helen Mbong	30-35	Member	Buea	Female
Felicia Nain	35-40	Pastor	Bamenda	Female
Lazarus Wah	40-45	Pastor	Bamenda	Male
Philomena Ekum	25-30	Deaconess	Bamenda	Female
Denicia Kolo	25-30	Deaconess	Bamenda	Female
Rosalind Mbonga	30-35	Member	Bamenda	Female
Samuel Dah	40-45	Elder	Yaoundé	Male
Comfort Sih	30-35	Deaconess	Yaoundé	Female
Samuella Bua	35-40	Member	Yaoundé	Female
Dominic Nanje	35-40	Pastor	Douala	Male
Clement Mbambad	45-50	Pastor	Douala	Male
Ebua Kum	40-45	Pastor	Douala	Male
Peter Siegnie	40-45	Pastor	Douala	Male
Greenfield Nchia	40-45	Pastor	Douala	Male
Tebah John	40-45	Pastor	Douala	Male

Great Excellence	50-55	Pastor	Douala	Male
Sako Emmanuel	50-55	Assistant Pastor	Douala	Male
Wanki	45-50	Assistant Pastor	Douala	Male
Teboh	40-45	Assistant Pastor	Douala	Male

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