



# The Charismatic Movement: It's Impact on the Evangelization of Nigeria, (Akwa Ibom State)

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**Abstract:** The Charismatic Movement believes in using all the gifts of grace recorded in the word of God in the divine task of world evangelization. Its emphasis is on "anointing that breaks the yoke". The Charismatics won't to see full demonstration of the power of God and not theory. They want massages and not sermons. They exist not for building towers and Cathedrals but solely for evangelism. They do this through crusades, camps, conventions, luncheons, mass media, testimonies, etc. The purpose of this article is to ascertain the impact of the Charismatic Movement on the evangelization of Nigeria with special reference to Akwa Ibom State.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Akwa Ibom State is one the states in Nigeria which was created in 1987: Christianity was introduced into the area in the early front of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and given then, her population is largely Christian.

Since the beginning of this century (20<sup>th</sup> century), according to Stanley M. Burgess *et al*, Christianity has witnessed the emergence of two great renewal movements of the spirit. These are the Pentecostal movement which began in 1901 and the Charismatic movement which emerged in the 1950s. "Whether through Pentecostal preachers like Charles H. Mason, Aimee Semple Mcherson, David Wilkerson, and Ray h. Hughes, or Charismatics like Episcopalian Dennis Bennett, faith healer oral Roberts, Roman catholic Leon-Joseph Cardinal Suenens, and television personality M. G. Robertson, these movements and their participants (both men and woman, clergy, and laity) have proclaimed that the spiritual power of the first century church can be the norm for Christians today". (Burgess *et al* 1988).

## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The church is an assembly of the redeemed under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It functions both as an organism and an organization. As an organism the church is alive and manifests all the attributes of living things. As an organization it has facets and structures within her system. Though she is ONE BODY under ONE LORD, she functions in different facets to fulfill god's ultimate purpose. This development has on the other hand been a course of rancor, strife and misunderstanding within the organization – Which facet serves God best – the orthodox, Pentecostal, Evangelical, Charismatic, Holiness movements?

It was because of these puzzling questions that the researcher decided to conduct an intellectual trip on one of these ecclesiastical movements that has not yet been given abundant recognition and whole – hearted approval in Nigeria. In some quarters, this movement is even out rightly condemned as an intruder in the ecclesiastic machinery of the Lord Jesus Christ. But does this movement have Biblical origins? Are Charismatics heretical in any sense? Are their role different from or complementary to that of other movements? Where have they failed and why? These questions fundamentally warranted this Research.

## 3. DEFINITION OF TERMS

- (a) Charisma (Noun) – Greek "gift of God's grace". "A divinely inspired gift, grace or talent, as for prophesying, healing, etc".
- (b) Charismatic (Adj): "of or having, or resulting from charisma". Designating or of any of various religious groups or movements that stress direct divine inspiration, manifested as in glossolalia, healing powers, etc". (Ibid).

- (c) Charismatic (None): "A member of a charismatic group or movement". "A person who supposedly has some divinely inspired power, as the ability to prophesy" (Ibid).
- (d) Impact: "The power of an event, idea, etc to produce changes, move the feelings, etc". (Ibid).
- (e) Movement: "A series of organized activities by people working concertedly toward same goal". "The organization consisting of those active in this way". (Ibid).
- (f) Evangelism: "A preaching of, or zealous effort to spread the gospel, as in revival meetings". (Ibid).
- (g) Evangelize: "To preach the gospel to," "To convert to Christianity."
- (h) Evangelization: "To preach the gospel" (Ibid).

#### **4. ORIGIN AND IDENTITY OF THE CHARISMATICS**

Just like other movements within and outside the church, the charismatic movement has attracted the attention of many renowned church scholars, particularly of Western origin. The researcher was really excited while perusing those fascinating write-ups.

In his book, "Power Evangelism and the word of God". Donald Bridge mentions three major movements that the church has so far experienced, namely: Fundamentalism, Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement. The charismatic movement, he says, "surfaced fifty years after the Pentecostal with very similar traits. Unlike Pentecostals, the Charismatics have often remained within the historic church denominations (there are said to be 12 million Roman Catholic Charismatics)".

Elwell (1985); Synan, V,( 1997) ,sees the charismatic movement as "An expression used to refer to a movement within historic Churches that began in the 1950s. In the early stages the movement was often termed "neo-pentecostal"; in more recent years it has frequently been referred to as the "charismatic renewal" or the charismatic renewal movement." Therefore participants are usually described as "Charismatics".

According to Burgess *et al* (1988) "the terms" "Pentecostal" and "Charismatic" are often used interchangeably. Indeed, they do have many features in common, even the expert cannot draw a dividing line. When points of delineation are decided upon and connected, the resultant line is invariably crooked, perhaps broken, and sometimes split into various branches!!. For one venturing into the field of Pentecostal and charismatic studies for the first time, the same Author suggests some kind of tour guide for distinguishing between the two. One is the theological, the other is ecclesiastical.

A theological differentiation might be along doctrinal lines, in particular spirit baptism (also called the baptism in or of the Holy Spirit). "It is oversimplified, but perhaps useful to say that Pentecostals subscribe to a work of grace subsequent to conversion in which the baptism is evidenced by glossolalia (speaking in tongues), for some, this baptism must also follow another act of grace sanctification. Charismatics, however, do not always advocate either the necessity of a second work of grace or the evidence of glossolalia as an affirmation of spirit baptism. Yet both emphasize the present work of the spirit through gifts in the life of the individual and the Church".

"An ecclesiastical differentiation especially concerns denominational affiliation. Thus, "Pentecostal" describes those participating in classical Pentecostal denominations such as Assemblies of God, the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), the Church of God in Christ, and the international Church of the four square Gospel. "Charismatics" would characterize persons outside these classical Pentecostal denominations whether they are within main line denominations or are part of an independent group.

Tracing the birth of the Charismatic Movement, both Burgess and Elwell associate it with the Ministry of Dennis Bennett, the then Episcopal Rector in Van Nuys, California in 1960. According to Elwell "since then there has been a continuing growth of the movement within many of the mainline churches: First, such Protestant churches as Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian (early 1960s), second, the Roman Catholic (beginning in 1967), and third the Greek Orthodox (about 1971). The Charismatic Movement has affected almost every historic church and has spread to many churches and countries beyond the United States". Burgess adds that part of the groundwork for charismatic renewal (Movement). Reflecting its deep roots in the Pentecostal movement had been laid by the ministries of Oral Roberts, David J. Du Plessis, Demos Shakarian and the Full Gospel Businessmen Fellowship International.

On how the movement greeted the Roman Catholic, he (Burgess says, “The renewal in the Roman Catholic which can in part be traced to the monumental changes ushered in by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican council, spread around the world and was experienced by both prelate and laity”. ‘To Roman Catholic Theologies Peter D. Kocken “the charismatic movement is a grace of God touching every aspect of the Christian life and is found across all the Christian Churches...”

In his book, “The church Militant” Paul Ajah (1989). Has this to say, “The value of the Charismatic movement which heated up in the 1960s and 1970s was that it forced the question of Pentecostalism to the attention of the great men and women of the frontline Christian denominations. Thus, the Pentecostal churches which had previously been isolated and despised by those “dignified” denomination began to be recognized. The charismatic movement was the wave of spiritual manifestations and experience in the great traditional denominations. That is, the spirit of God visited most of those churches and got respectable numbers of individuals baptized. Those groups who received the baptism recognized their sameness with the already existing Pentecostal churches, and other people saw it too. Yet, the charismatics, in most cases, did not form their own denominations...” quoting from Siegfried Gressmann, (1981), Rev. Ajah says, “The Charismatic breakthrough had arrived”.

Elwell presents the following as particular emphases reflected variously in the charismatic movement.

**Baptism with the Holy Spirit:** “There is common recognition of baptism with the Holy Spirit as a distinctive Christian experience. It is viewed as an event wherein the believer is “filled with” the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Baptism with the Holy Spirit is understood to result from “the gift of the Holy Spirit” wherein the spirit is freely “poured out”, “falls upon”, “comes on”, “anoints”, endues” the believer with “power from on high”. Spirit baptism is said to occur either at the time of conversion (through repentance and forgiveness) or subsequent thereto. It is viewed by the charismatics as being filled with the Holy Spirit that brings about powerful witness to Jesus Christ”. Being understood as an act of God’s sovereign grace, the gift may be received only through faith in Jesus Christ who is the mediator of the gift and the baptism. “Believing that Jesus Christ was both born of the Holy Spirit as Saviour and anointed with the Holy Spirit as he began his ministry, the charismatics correspondingly need both a birth of the spirit for salvation and anointing of the spirit for ministry in his name”.

**Speaking in Tongues:** “In the charismatic movement, speaking in tongues – glossolalia occupies a significant place. It is generally understood to be communication with God in language other than one known to the speaker, it is viewed as transcendent speech by the enabling of the Holy Spirit” still, according to him, “The essential charismatic claim about glossolalia is that this is the vehicle of communication par excellence between man and God – the language of transcendent prayer and praise...” for the charismatic movement at large, singing in the spirit – signing in tongues – occupies an important place, particularly in situations of community worship. Speaking in tongues in understood not to be irrational but supranational utterance”,

**Spiritual Gifts:** “By definition”, says Elwell, “the charismatic movement is concerned with charismata, the Greek term for “gifts of grace” everywhere throughout the charismatic movement, there is the claim that all the charismata or charisma, mentioned in scripture are, or should be, operational in the Christian community”. He further states “Whereas in large sectors of Christendom many of the gifts have been viewed as belonging only to the first century Christianity, the charismatic movement stresses their continuing importance.” This, Elwell says is the reason why many charismatics prefer the name “Charismatic renewal” to “Charismatic Movement” to lay emphasis on a renewal of the gifts in our time.

“It is generally recognized that the Biblical charismata include a wide range of gifts as described in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Peter 4:10-11, and 1 Corinthians 12-14 (chapters 12 to 14). The word “charisma” is also used in Roman 1:11, 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6. All these gifts, charismatics hold, should be functional in the body of Christ. The focal point of the charismatics, however, is 1 Corinthians 12-14, especially 12:4-11. The gifts make for a dynamic, vital community life”. Elwell refers to them as “power tools” for the upholding of the community and making of a total ministry”. He concludes that charismatics generally recognize that spiritual gifts cannot substitute for spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22) which represent the maturation of the believer in Christ.

From the foregoing, it can be established that the charismatic movement actually emphasize the Holy Spirit who is the driving force of evangelism – “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”. Acts 1:8 (KJV). The scripture show that he church cannot evangelize without the power of the Holy Spirit-direction, signs and wonders as well as conviction and salvation of sinners. Through this experience therefore, it can see at a glance that the charismatic movement has created an appreciable impact on the evangelization of Nigeria.

## **5. THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT IN AKWA IBOM STATE**

In Nigeria, the charismatic movement stated in 1970s, the birth place being the University of Ibadan. The Roman Catholics were the frontliners, hence, usually referred to as “The Roman Catholic Charismatic Movement”. Initially, and even now, most Roman Catholic leaders did not welcome the movement as it was considered an aberration of Catholicism. Most charismatics in the Roman Catholic set up were branded “heretics or “fanatics” and ostracized. Meanwhile, in spite of tough religious sanctions to stop the movement, it has affected historic churches like the Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist in addition to Roman Catholic.

Apart from the Roman Catholic Charismatics who remain largely (as they are welcome) in their churches, those from other churches are active members of the following Christian groups: Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship International, The scripture Union Pilgrims Group, Hospital Christian Fellowship, and Nigeria Fellowship of Evangelical students. Others operate as Youth Fellowships in Churches like Qua Iboe, Methodist, Baptist and Anglican. Furthermore, others belong to Evangelical groups such as Uma Ukpai Evangelistic Association, Goodnews Ministry, etc. In Akwa Ibom State, the charismatic movement has also affected the Roman Catholic churches in Uyo, Abak, and other cities.

In December, 1992, the charismatics of one of the Roman Catholic Churches in Uyo who called themselves “The Charismatic Renewal” conducted an Evangelistic convention christened” MOUNT HORED ’92. In 1993, there was also another crusade conducted by the “Watchman Charismatic Renewal Movement”. At Uyo Christened “The story of our time. It has also been ascertained that most Christians are both Pentecostal and charismatic in the state.

The impact of the charismatic movement on the evangelization of Nigeria (Akwa Ibom State) can be seen in the following ways.

### *Crusades*

This term describes the very elaborate outdoor or open air evangelistic campaigns with which we are “GREATER UYO FOR CHRIST” “CITY WIDE CRUSADE”, etc featuring Rev. (Dr.) Uma Ukpai. The charismatics, in addition to funding such campaigns also, usually serve as ushers prayer warriors and counsellors. This kind of mass evangelism has resulted in the conversion of many people.

### *Camps/Conventions*

One major way by which the charismatic movement has influenced the evangelization of Akwa Ibom State is through camp meeting and convention. Public buildings are usually hired for such meetings, during which anointed men of God would preach and teach. The FGBMFI leads in this method of evangelism. The recently concluded convention at Uyo (Akwa Ibom State). Held in October 1992 had led both the conversion of sinners and the revival of Christians.

### *Media Evangelism*

The charismatics make use of both print and electronic media in disseminating the message of the Lord Jesus. Some of them have sponsored Radio, Television programmes, while they also engage in literature distribution. Many have been reached for Christ through this medium.

### *Breakfast/Dinner Parties*

This method of evangelism has remained exclusively within the charismatic circle. Unlike other methods. Breakfast and Dinner parties are meant for top citizens of the state. The FGBMFI and Uma Evangelistic Association have used this particular avenue to evangelize the cream of the population of Akwa Ibom State.

### *Power Display*

Through the exhibition of spiritual gifts (charismata), the charismatics have won very many souls for Christ. In fact, they love power-encounter, during which signs and wonders are displayed. Among them are those gifted with the ability to cast out devils (mummy water, Ogbanje, or “Ndedehe spirit). Many have been healed in their meetings, who have also become Christians.

### *Testimony Evangelism*

The charismatics also employ this method in evangelizing their domains. Testimonies of persons who were either witches/wizards, Criminals, demon possessed or Juju priests are patronized by the charismatics. In fact, thousand always throng their meetings to listen either to Evangelist Helen Ukpabio (ex-demon worshipper). Only heaven will reveal the number of souls converted through this avenue. The charismatics, indeed have tried:

Finally, it is also worthy of mention that through most charismatics in the state, some Pentecostal/Charismatic preachers have been invited to minister in those mainline churches where they worship. Such services have led to the conversion of souls. They have also helped in the evangelization of the state through their intercessory prayers, gospel music and film, seminars, symposia as well as sponsoring of preachers. In their various places of work (hospitals, schools, government departments, etc) the charismatics have influenced their colleagues in no small measure both through their godly live and personal evangelism.

By not being affiliated to particular denominations, the charismatics have magnetized freelance worshippers who detest what they call “denominational bondage”. Because they also de-emphasize most of the “man-made rules and doctrines”, such as dressing styles and hair-do persons who would have remained offended and eternally lost have turned to the Charismatic fellowships where they worship and serve God without intimidation.

The charismatics can boast of dynamic, power-packed, love-flowing services. There are varieties, different guest-speakers and preachers, demonstration of the power of God, which attract people, especially the youth, and the affluent. In fact, this is one particular Christian gathering that lacks the illiterate old folks.

## **6. SUMMARY**

### **6.1. Impact of the Charismatic Movement on the Evangelization of Akwa Ibom State**

From the findings made, the charismatic movement has created lot of impact on the evangelization of Nigeria. It was also discovered that the charismatics evangelize in the following ways:- crusades (Mass evangelism campaign, camps/conventions, Media Evangelism, Breakfast/Dinner parties, power Display, Testimony evangelism, gospel music/film, seminars/symposia, personal evangelism, their lives, sponsoring preachers as well as their attractive fellowships.

They are generous givers, active in the deliverance ministry, operate with less administrative and doctrinal problems, mostly felt in urban areas and through them top citizens of the land have been won for the Lord.

### **6.2. Recommendation**

Based on this study, the following have been recommended:

The charismatics in the state should pay more attention to the vast unreached rural areas. They should constitute themselves into a formidable team that will conduct evangelistic campaigns in the rural areas. The Rivers State Rural Evangelism Team is a good example to emulate.

Since most of the historic churches in Akwa Ibom State are yet to be touched by the charismatic flame-Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian, etc. the existing groups should spare no effort at penetrating them.

Usually, English Language is the only medium of communication during camps, conventions and Dinner parties without interpretation. This has led to the gross marginalization of the non-literate folks. To ensure grassroots participation interpretation into vernacular should be encouraged. This will bring about not only the conversion of the top citizens but also the poor rural folks.

The charismatics should pay more attention to literatures evangelism. They can do this by printing gospel tracts and periodicals for distribution.

Finally, it is obvious that there is some kind of operational friction between the “charismatics” and the Pentecostals”. Pentecostal churches hold the charismatics in suspicion in terms of “theft of members” while the charismatics accuse them of “caging their sheep. To allay such fears and perhaps, reduce if not eradicate such conflict, avenues should be sought for mutual co-existence within the body of Christ.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

From the foregoing, it will be erroneous to assert that the charismatic movement has not played any significant role in the evangelization of Nigeria. This study has proved that the movement apart from engaging directly in the evangelization programme of the nation, has been a major supplier of the evangelistic fuel needed by existing churches including the Pentecostals. If Nigeria can boast of responsible men and women in the Christian faith, about 80% of such have been converted and established through the charismatic movement.

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