

WILLIAM SEYMOUR AND AFRICAN PENTECOSTAL HISTORIOGRAPHY: THE CASE OF GHANA

Cephas N. Omenyo

1. Introduction

At the world Mission conference in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1910, Africa was not represented. Africa was not part of the Christendom and was thus not a key player in Christian missions. However, there had been major sustained missionary activities in Sub-Saharan Africa nearly a century earlier.

Why did these activities not result in making Africa (at least) a minor player in world Christianity? Why was Africa still seen as a mission field, and as a result African Christianity was still dependent on the North for its sustenance. During the celebration of the centennial of William J. Seymour, it is appropriate to trace his impact on not only Pentecostalism, but the historical development of African Christianity on which he made a significant impact.

2. The Church in contemporary Africa - a different picture

In recent times, much has been written about the paradigmatic shift of the center of gravity of Christianity from the North to the South, resulting in a majority of contemporary Christians living in Asia, South America and Africa, with Africa recording the fastest growth in church membership.¹

A significant trend in this shift is the fact that the growth is mainly found among Pentecostals and charismatics. Furthermore, invariably, the growth is either accompanied by or a resultant impact of the general Pentecostalization of Christianity, a phenomenon that knows no denominational barriers and thus cuts across all denominational barriers.¹ It has also been observed that mainline, historic churches that experience much growth have seen various charismatic renewal groups emerging and vigorously operating within them. Thus, the mainline churches in Ghana have been significantly impacted, to the extent that the ethos of some mainline congregations is akin to that of Pentecostal/charismatic churches.¹

3. Deficits of the 19th century Western missionary enterprise in Africa

The mainline churches are products of missionary bodies, which began effective and sustained evangelization in Ghana (formerly Gold Coast) in 1828, with the arrival of the Basel Mission which produced the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Subsequently, other western missionary societies followed, and gave birth to other mainline churches such as the Methodist, Catholic, Anglican, Evangelical Presbyterian and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. For all intents and purposes, the mainline churches during the immediate post-independence era were invariably complete replicas of their respective missionary societies. Thus, they imbibed the ethos of the western missionary bodies. The obvious problem that attended this way of transmission of Christianity, which did not take the African context into serious consideration, was lack of constructive dialogue with traditional cultures and spiritualities.⁴

Non-Western Religion, (Edinburgh: Orbis Books, 1995); "Facing the challenge: Africa in World Christianity in the 21st Century - A Vision of the African Christian Future", *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 1 (1998), 52-57.

² C.f. Cephas N. Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana*. Zoetermeer [The Netherlands]: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 291.

³ See A.O. Atiemo, *The Rise of the Charismatic Movement in the mainline Churches in Ghana*, (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1993), 24-66; Cephas Omenyo, "Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches: The case of the Bible Study and Prayer Group of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana", M.Phil thesis (Ghana: University of Ghana, 1994).

⁴ C.f. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 69.

¹ See A.F. Walls, "Towards understanding of Africa's place in Christian history", in J.S. Pobee (ed.), *Religion in a pluralistic Society*, (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1976), 180-189; "African Christianity in the History of Religions", *Studies in World Christianity* 2 (1996), 183-203; K. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: Renewal of a*

The late professor Kofi Busia, an eminent Ghanaian Sociologist and a Methodist lay preacher, articulated this concern as follows:

Those who have been responsible for the propagation of the Christian gospel in other lands and cultures have not shown sufficient awareness of the need for an encounter between the Christian religion and the cosmology of the peoples outside European culture and traditions. It is this which has made Christianity either alien or superficial or both.⁵

Similarly, S.G. Williamson, who worked on 'a comparative study of the impact of Akan religion and the Christian faith,'⁶ corroborates Busia's assertion in view of the failure of western missionaries to address issues related to African primal worldview with its belief in spirits.⁷ Williamson observed the inability of the Western missionary enterprise (whose legacy was inherited by mainline churches) to emancipate Akans from the fear of witches and ghosts, belief in the sanctions of spirit-ancestors and the potency of traditional priests to support them in times of crises. Kwame Bediako, a contemporary Ghanaian theologian, articulates the problem of the mainline churches in Africa as follows:

If the Christian faith as it was transmitted failed to take serious account of the traditional beliefs held about 'gods many and lords many' ancestors, spirits and other spiritual agencies and their impact on human life, then it also failed to meet the Akan in his personally experienced religious need. Looked at from this perspective, missionary activity never amounted to a genuine encounter, and the Christian communities that have resulted have not really known how to relate to their traditional culture in terms other than those of denunciation or of separateness. Dialogue has been distinctively absent. ...The mission churches were...marked generally by their separateness from their cultures, rather than by their involvement in them. The Christian tradition as historically received through the missionary enterprise has, on the whole, been unable to sympathize with or relate to the spiritual realities of the traditional world-view. It is

unable to sympathize with or relate to the spiritual realities of the traditional world-view. It is not so much a case of an unwillingness to relate to these realities, as of not having learnt to do so.⁸

Consequently, Africans were unable to reconcile their worldview with the type of Christianity that they inherited and thereby the impact of mainline Christianity was dulled. Kwame Bediako's diagnosis of the inability of the mainline churches to dialogue with realities of the African context gives hope that if African churches 'learn to do so' they can scratch where the African is itching most. The African Christian's ability to do so has been largely found in the AICs and Pentecostalism.

4. Azusa and the emergence of Pentecostalism in Ghana

Around the period that the 1910 missionary conference was taking place, a major missionary activity had begun in Africa which was to be part of a major answer to the problem of African Christianity--the Azusa Street Revival had started in 1906. Among other things, the Azusa Street Revival was significant in many respects, such as: Firstly, It was second to none in terms of its reach and depth of its influence both in the US and abroad. This consequently led to the emergence of several centers of Pentecostalism in cities throughout the US. It thus produced many Pentecostal denominations including the Assemblies of God, which is of particular relevance to this paper.⁹

Secondly, and more significant for our discussion, is the unprecedented number of missionaries that the Azusa Street Revival produced. Within five months of the birth of this movement, thirty-eight missionaries had gone out from Azusa. In only two years it had spread to

⁸ Bediako, *Christianify in Africa*, 69.

⁹ Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit: a Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spiritualify* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), p. 34, C.M. Robeck, Jr. 'Azusa Street Revival' in Stanley Burges a.o. (eds.), *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 33 who asserts that 'nearly every Pentecostal denomination in the United States traces its roots to some way or the other to the Apostolic Faith Mission in 312 Azusa Street'. The Assemblies of God Church initially began as a fellowship of Pentecostal ministers but later developed into the White American Pentecostal denomination.

⁵ K.A. Busia, "Has the Christian faith been adequately represented?", *International Review of Mission*, 50, (1963), 86-89.

⁶ S.G. Williams, *Akan Religion and the Christian Faith* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1965), 152-164.

⁷ Ibid.

over fifty nations world-wide...'" The nations include China, India, Japan, the Philippines, South Africa, the Middle East and Liberia. Cecil Mel Robeck, Jr., who has done an extensive work on the history of Azusa Street, in writing about the 'Azusa Street missionaries in Africa,' has noted that: 'By far the largest number of the first-time missionaries who went out in 1906 from the Azusa Street Mission went to Africa'¹¹ Liberia in West Africa was the destination of the very first batch of African-American Azusa missionaries. By January 1907 twelve African-Americans were serving in and around Monrovia, Liberia as missionaries.¹² This development could be the Christian variant of the thousands of African-Americans, mostly former slaves who availed themselves of the American Colonization Society's help to return them to Africa, the so-called "back to Africa" program. It is not known how many, if any at all, were products of the Azusa Street Revival.

One striking development is the claim by some of the Azusa missionaries that they had special ability to minister in the mother tongue of Liberians-the *Kru* language. For instance, Cecil Robeck, Jr. notes:

Lucy Farrow wrote back to the Azusa Street Mission that she had been able to communicate with the natives in the Kru language. The people in Los Angeles as well as Charles Parham believed that her tongue had been a genuine language. Whatever the case, she seems to have had a small but effective ministry among the Kru people, including a local king, in or near Johnsonville. Upon her return to the United States in mid 1907, Farrow claimed that twenty members of the Kru tribe had "received their Pentecost" while others had been "saved, sanctified, and healed," under her ministry. On two occasions, she claimed, the Lord had given her "the gift of the Kru language" and permitted her "to preach two sermons to the people in their own tongue." She bore witness to the fact that the "heathen" in Liberia had been baptized in the Spirit when they "spoke in English and some in other tongues."¹³

¹⁰ Iain MacRobert, 'The Black Roots of Pentecostalism' in Jan A.B. Jongeneel, a.o. (eds.), *Pentecost, Mission and Ecumenism: Essays on Intercultural Theology* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992), 77.

¹¹ Draft of an unpublished paper by C.M. Robeck, Jr. on 'Azusa Street Revival' n.p.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

If the case was indeed that, Lucy Farrow had a supernatural ability to speak the *Kru* language (*Xenolalia*) the development was very spectacular. And even if she learned the language, for her to be able to do so within five months or so, could still be seen as a special ability given to her by the Holy Spirit. The effectiveness of the Liberia mission lies in the fact that it was done through the medium of the mother tongue which is a pre-requisite to effective mission.

Be that as it may, it appears that the Liberian mission was an effective one which needs to be well researched and properly documented. It is sad to note that not much is known about the initial work done by the Azusa missionaries in the missionary history of Liberia. Robeck corroborates this fact by noting the following:

Sadly, the foundational work of Mrs. Hutchings, Lucy Farrow, and the Batman family, the Cooks, Lee, McKinney and the McCauleys have disappeared completely from all official histories of missions in Liberia. McCauley's mission was the first permanent Pentecostal congregation on the continent of Africa, and it may ultimately prove to be the source of the Pentecostal theology and experience that produced Prophet William Wade Harris and his millions-strong Harris church of the Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire). It was African-Americans, not whites, who established this congregation.¹⁴

Although Seymour never stepped on Ghanaian soil and none of his missionaries to Africa set foot in Ghana, one can trace the impact of Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival on Ghanaian Christianity in four main streams as discussed below.

4.1 The Prophet W. Wade Harris connection

The present writer associates himself with Robeck in conjecturing that Prophet William Wade Harris (1860-1929), himself a Kru man, probably had contacts with the Azusa missionaries who ministered to the Kru-speaking ethnic group of Liberia. This is mainly because there was no previously known Pentecostal presence in Liberia prior to the era of the Azusa missionaries. Although it is not impossible for an individual without a previous contact with Pentecostals to have the Pentecostal experience, it has been shown (as demonstrated below) that the Pentecostal experience "does not drop from heaven," but it is usually

¹⁴ Ibid. Emphasis mine.

experienced through contact of human agency. In light of this, one has always been watching out for a possible Pentecostal presence during Harris's time in Liberia; and, there is the need for further research on this issue.

Harris was the first prophet to minister in a typical Pentecostal style, as described by G.M. Haliburton as follows:

Harris claimed to be a prophet with all the special powers that God bestows on those He chooses. These powers enabled him to drive out demons and spirits, the enemies of God. He cured the sick in body and in mind by driving out the evil beings preying on them. Those who practiced black magic had to confess and repent or he made them mad. He had all the power of the fetish men and more: with his basin of holy water he put God's seal on those who repented and accepted baptism.¹⁵

Harris's ministry presented him as a Prophet who had the charisma and power to exorcise, perform spiritual healing and miracles by which he demonstrated God's power. He first worked in Ivory Coast where it is estimated that over one hundred thousand people were converted through his ministry. In Apolonia in the Western region of Ghana alone he is reported to have led over fifteen thousand people to Christ and over fifty-two villages were reported to have responded to his message. Casely-Hayford, an African scholar, described Harris' activities in the following words: "This is not a revival. It is Pentecost. Its orbit is worldwide...men, women and children are drawn as by irresistible power, ...It fills one with awe to hear some of these converts pray."¹⁶

The present writer has noted the following about Harris's ministry:

The legacy Harris has left for African Christianity is his clear understanding of the spiritual universe of Africa and the capacity he had to penetrate it. This ability, coupled with his commitment to freeing of the people he ministered to from the

¹⁵ Kofi Asare Opoku, 'A Brief History of Independent Church Movements in Ghana since 1862' in *The Rise of Independent Churches in Ghana* (Accra: Asempa Publishing, 1990), 16.

¹⁶ Cited by H.W. Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), 271.

power of evil spirits, made the gospel very relevant to the deeply felt needs and aspirations of people.¹⁷

Kwame Bediako regards Harris as:

A paradigm both of a non-Western and essentially primal apprehension of the Gospel and also of a settled self-consciousness as an African Christian uncluttered by Western missionary controls. Even though Prophet Harris has not been alone in demonstrating these qualities, it seems that he exemplifies them to a very high degree.¹⁸

Although Harris did not found any church but collaborated with the Western missionaries, some of his followers started their own independent churches known as African Independent Churches (AICs)¹⁹ which are generally acknowledged by scholars as the authentic African expression of the Christian faith. They are generally acknowledged as movements that seek to renew African Christianity and make it more relevant to the African context.²⁰

4.2. The Apostolic Faith connection

The root of Classical Pentecostalism in Ghana is traced to Mr. Anim, the founder, who was later known as Apostle Anim, generally regarded as the Father of Classical Pentecostalism in Ghana. Apostle Anim subscribed to copies of "The Apostolic Faith" published by "The Apostolic Faith" ministry based in Portland, Oregon, USA. The Apostolic Faith was founded by Florence Louise Crawford in 1907. Crawford was an associate of Seymour's Azusa Street movement but broke away after Seymour married. One significant thing Crawford did was, when leaving she took away Seymour's mailing list without his knowledge, thus making Seymour unable to contact his numerous followers, which was the main nerve centre for his ministry.

¹⁷ Cephas N. Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 69.

¹⁸ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 91-92.

¹⁹ The acronym AIC could represent African Independent Churches; African Instituted Churches; African Indigenous Churches and African Initiative in Christianity. These are churches, which have been "...founded in Africa by Africans primarily for Africans" (see H.W. Turner, 'A typology of African Religious Movements', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 1 (1967), 1.

²⁰ See Cephas Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 4, for references to such scholarly works.

The Apostolic Faith magazine was an answer to Anim's search for a deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit. This was his testimony after reading the teachings of the magazine: 'I was faced with the necessity of contending for a deeper faith and greater spiritual power than what my primary religious experience was able to afford, and I began to seek with such trepidation to know more about the Holy Ghost.'²¹ In spite of the seeming opposition from some of his leaders on the issue of Holy Spirit baptism as taught by the magazine, Anim declared as follows:

This doctrine brought about the total exclusion from the Faith Tabernacle and the First Century Gospel in that they were entirely unacquainted with the operations of the Holy Spirit, not only did they not know but would not have anything to do with the teachings as recorded in 1 Cor. 12:1-12, 28-31.²²

Under the influence of *The Apostolic Faith* from which Anim taught his group, they experienced the Holy Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues in 1927, five years prior to the advent of the first European Pentecostal missionary (September 1932).²³ This is even referred to as the 'Dispensation of the Holy Spirit in Ghana.'²⁴

Later, Anim's movement sought assistance from the Apostolic Church in the U.K., which is another offspring of Seymour's Azusa Street movement. The Apostolic Church in response appointed Mr. and Mrs. McKeown to Ghana in 1937 to assist Anim. Mr. and Mrs. McKeown's ministry in Ghana led to the formation of three major Classical Pentecostal Churches in Ghana, namely, The Christ Apostolic Church, The Apostolic Church and the Church of Pentecost.²⁵

4.3. The Assemblies of God connection.

In 1931, the first Pentecostal missionaries to Ghana, Rev. Lloyd and Margaret Shirer, who were missionaries in the present Burkina Faso,

²¹ See E.K. Larbi, *Pentecostalism: Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, (Accra: Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2001), 103.

²² Ibid.

²³ See Abamfo O. Atiemo, *The Rise of Charismatic Movements in the mainline Churches in Ghana* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1993), 20-21.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ See Robert W. Whyllie, 'Pioneers of Ghanaian Pentecostalism: Peter Anim and James McKeown', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 6 (1994), 109-22; Chapters 5-9 of E.K. Larbi's, *Pentecostalism: Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*.

crossed over to the northern region of Ghana where they began mission work on the ticket of the Assemblies of God Church, US.²⁶ They endeared themselves so much to the people of the north that Shirer was honored as a chief.²⁷

4.4. The Four Square Gospel Church connection.

The latest connection of Ghanaian Pentecostalism to Azusa is the Four Square Gospel Church, also a direct product of the Azusa Revival, which appeared in Ghana in the 1980s and is in fact a minority Pentecostal church.

5. The spread of Pentecostalism in Africa/Ghana

It has been observed that Pentecostalism does not 'drop from heaven' per se. It spreads through the contact of persons, churches, organizations, magazines, etc. We shall thus employ the sociological theory-'Diffusion of innovation theory' to discuss the dynamics of the spread of Pentecostalism. There are three crucial elements which are pertinent concepts of this theoretical frame of reference which are noted in any diffusion of innovation analysis.²⁸ They are: the Innovation itself; its diffusion (communication) through certain channels; and members of a social system among whom it is communicated. It seems necessary here to define the three elements of the diffusion of an innovation analysis.

An innovation is an idea, practice, or object perceived as new by the individual or a group of individuals who adopt it. The important point in this connection is that, the idea, practice, or object is perceived as new by the adopters. It matters little whether or not it is 'objectively' new as measured by the length of time since its first use or discovery. It is the 'perceived newness' for the individual or group of individuals that determines his/her or their reaction. In this paper, the Pentecostal gifts and manifestations are perceived as new by believers who experience them.

²⁶ *Assemblies of God, Ghana 1931-1981* (Accra: Assemblies of God Church, 1981), 3.

²⁷ See H.W. Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), 324.

²⁸ See Evaret M. Rogers & R.J. Burdge, *Social Change in Rural Societies* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1972), 352.

Three main characteristics of innovation are worth mentioning here: relative advantage, compatibility and observability.²⁹

- i. Relative advantage is the extent to which an innovation is perceived as better than the ideas it seeks to supersede. What matters is whether or not the individual perceives the innovation as being advantageous. The greater the perceived advantage of an innovation, the quicker its rate of adoption. In this paper, the rate at which individuals join the Pentecostal churches is determined by the degree to which the ethos of the churches is perceived to be better than what they had known in the past.
- ii. Compatibility is the extent to which an innovation is perceived as consistent with existing values, past experiences, and needs of the receivers. The compatibility of an idea thus determines the rate of its adoption. For example, if the ethos of the Pentecostal church is perceived as consistent with the culture and goals of a people and their existential needs it will be embraced more quickly than where it is inconsistent.
- iii. Observability is the extent to which the results of an innovation are visible to the receiver and to others. The easier it is for a group of individuals to observe the results of an innovation, the more likely they are to adopt it. For example, the changes people see in the lives of Pentecostals, and the sort of testimonies that they give about the results of prayer, deliverance, and spiritual gifts manifested by members of the tradition determine the rate at which others join Pentecostal churches.

Diffusion (communication) is the process by which a new idea (innovation) is spread from its source or from one place to its ultimate users or adopters. A pre-condition for the **diffusion** process is human interaction in which one person communicates a new idea to another person or several others. Simply put, diffusion occurs when there is a new idea, and an individual who is conversant with the innovation

²⁹ Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovation* (New York: The Free Press, 1962), 312.

communicates it to another individual who is not yet aware of the new idea by means of a communication channel connecting the two.

Everett Rogers defines a social system as used in a diffusion theory as 'a population of individuals who are functionally differentiated and engaged in collective problem-solving behavior. The members of a social system are individuals, although these individuals may represent informal groups, industrial firms or schools.'³⁰ For example, a social system in this sense may be the people in a geographical area or members of a church.

The spread of Pentecostalism and its related problems can be explained in the light of the theory of **diffusion** of innovation. In the first place, members of the Pentecostal churches perceive the charismata innovation. In other words, the way the groups pray, the stress they put on gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as gifts of speaking in tongues, healing and the general spontaneity that characterizes the meetings, are perceived as new in Africa. Hence, the Pentecostal churches are seen as innovation. The three main characteristics of innovation are found in the way Pentecostal churches function. Members perceive the fact that it is advantageous to belong to the churches in the sense that they find some fulfillment, particularly, in the areas of healing and spiritual renewal activities, and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, which give renewed confidence and faith in God.

Through their testimonies, Pentecostals try to let others see the effect of the activities and programs on their lives. With the three main characteristics of innovation (i.e. compatibility, relative advantage, and observability) satisfied by the activities of Pentecostal churches, they can be described as innovation in their respective churches.

The Spread (diffusion) of Pentecostalism also illustrates the basic pre-condition of **diffusion** process, which is: 'the human interaction in which one person communicates a new idea to another person or several others'. All Pentecostal churches started as a result of the founder or **leader(s)** interacting with a Pentecostal, a Pentecostal prayer group or a Pentecostal church. The theory of **diffusion** aptly describes the way the Pentecostal church spreads. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the theory is not absolute: God in his sovereignty can cause a person or a group of persons to experience Pentecost without prior interaction with a Pentecostal group.

³⁰ Cited by K. Nyamekye Bame, 'Contemporary Cosmic Plays in Ghana: A study of Innovation and Diffusion and the Social Functions of an Art-Form', M.A. thesis (Ontario, 1969), 5-6.

Part of the attractiveness of Pentecostalism in Africa is due to its response to African spirituality. In other words, the Pentecostal movement finds fertile ground in Africa because most of its practices take the African worldview seriously. As the diffusion of innovation has demonstrated, the Pentecostal experience is compatible and observable and has relative advantage for most Africans. Therefore, it will continue to be popular and spread among them.

6. Significance of Seymour for Africa and world Christianity

Although W.J. Seymour never touched the soils of Africa, he indirectly influenced Ghanaian Christianity through the various missionary agencies that drew their inspiration from the Azusa Revival.

History has vindicated the vision for missions which characterized the Azusa Revival by the establishment of Azusa Revival's kind of churches in Africa, Ghana in particular. Today, nearly 25% of Ghana's Christians are Pentecostals.³¹ Pentecostalism and the variant charismatic movement form the fastest growing Christian movement in Ghana. Pentecostals are increasingly setting agendas for serious theological discourse in Ghana. This is mainly because the attractiveness of Pentecostalism lies in the fact that it is perceived by many to have been successful in appropriating biblical resources to meet the pressing needs of Africans.

The emergence of the AICs and Pentecostalism has brought to light the realization among Africans that it is possible for Africans to express themselves as Christians without losing their African identity. This has enabled Christianity to sink its roots deep in African soil.

The Azusa Street Revival highlights aspects of black origins of Pentecostalism. According to Iain MacRobert, "The particular attraction of Pentecostalism in non-western societies lies in its black experiential roots which provide a substratum of enduring values and themes for the bulk of the Movement outside of white North America and Europe."³² MacRobert, observes that Pentecostalism has largely been colored by a distinctively black culture thus producing a black form of

Christianity.³³ He quotes Albert J. Raboteau to support his assertion as follows:

Shaped and modified by a new environment, elements of African folklore, music, language, and religion were transplanted to the New World by the African Diaspora...One of the most durable and adaptable constituents of the slave's culture, linking African past with American present, was his religion. It is important to realize however, that in America the religions of Africa have not been merely preserved as static "Africanisms" or as archaic "retentions"... African styles of worship, forms of rituals, systems of belief, and fundamental perspectives have remained vital on this side of the Atlantic, not because they were preserved in a "pure" orthodoxy but because they were transformed. Adaptability, based upon respect for spiritual power wherever it originated, accounted for the openness of African religions to syncretism with other religious traditions and for the continuity of a distinctively African religious consciousness.³⁴

The observations by MacRobert and Raboteau make a lot of sense considering the fact that Africans are easily amenable to Pentecostalism. Africans saw themselves and their culture in features of the Pentecostal movement. The fact that Pentecostalism, which has been partly colored by African spirituality, is determining the agenda for African and indeed world Christianity is a pointer to the fact that Seymour is relevant in African and indeed world Christian historiography. In other words, Seymour has a say in determining the shape of African and world Christianity in the 21st century.

A characteristic feature of the Azusa movement was the unprecedented missionaries it produced for the world, particularly Africa. African/Ghanaian Pentecostal missions to the non-African/Ghanaian communities beyond Africa/Ghana which is on the ascendancy can be seen as a feature inherited from the Azusa missionaries. Could this trend be the fulfillment of the dream of Karl Barth, who predicted a paradigm shift of world-view from the European world-view, which according to him was found wanting in the African world-view, in the following words: "Magical world-view? Who knows, maybe our fellow Christians

³¹ The 2000 population Census conducted by Ghana Statistical Service.

³² Iain MacRobert, 'The Black Roots of Pentecostalism', in Jan A.B. Jongeneel, a.o. (eds.), *Pentecost Mission and Ecumenism: Essays on Intercultural Theology* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992), 74.

³³ Ibid. 75

³⁴ Ibid, quoting Albeert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 4-5.

in the new churches in Asia and Africa whose perception in this respect is pretty much alive can come to our aid one day?"³⁵

7. Conclusion

Charles F. Parham, Seymour's teacher, unfortunately had a jaundiced vision for Pentecostal mission abroad as exemplified in the following criticism made by him:

Seymour, drunken with power and swollen to bursting, sent for a hundred or more of this kind of workers to fill the earth with the worst prostitution of Christianity I ever witnessed; in shame we have had to hang our heads, as fanatics and fools have returned from foreign field in sin, disgrace and shame, with only monkey chattering; bringing a just criticism and condemnation from the Christian press and **public**.³⁶

Today, African Christians can state with certainty, that the gallant attempt Seymour and Azusa missionaries made to work in Africa was a glorious effort. Africans can raise their heads, with their chest out with pride (not shame), for the initiative and sacrifice made by Azusa missionaries, which has transformed African Christianity into a viable and vibrant one. They constitute a major factor that accounts for the paradigmatic shift of the center of gravity of Christianity to the southern continents, particularly Africa. This is because the bulk of the growth and the bulk of African missionaries in foreign lands are found in the **Pentecostal/charismatic** movement. This has implications for the shape of world Christianity in the 21st century. African spirituality and theology are increasingly becoming a global phenomenon and are representative of Christianity for the 21st century. This story must be told loud and clear through the research and writing of African and indeed world Church history, with Seymour and the Azusa movement given its proper place.

³⁵ Karl Barth, *Das christliche Leben, Die Kirchliche Dogmatik* IV, 4, Fragmente, 1959-1961 (Zurich, Theologischer Verlag, 1979), 369 & 373, cited by Cephas Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 303.

³⁶ Charles F. Parham, "Unity", *The Apostolic Faith* [Baxter Springs, KS] 1.4 (June 1912), 9-10, courtesy of Cecil M. Robeck, Jr.