

## CONTEMPORARY HISTORICAL NUANCES OF MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES OF THE DEEPER CHRISTIAN LIFE MINISTRY IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

The Deeper Christian Life Ministry was founded in 1973 by Pastor William Folorunso Kumuyi, an indigene of Erin-Ijesa, a town in Oriade Local Government Area of Osun State. The Church celebrated her 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023. The Church is distinct and peculiar in its beliefs and teachings as a Pentecostal Church in Nigeria. The problem of the study was the survival of the ministry in contemporary Nigeria, where the pursuit of wealth, prosperity, teaching and provision of social facilities were given much attention. The methodology adopted in the research was historical. The findings of the Church indicated that there was much focus on: "holiness, salvation and heaven". Therefore, members of the Church were encouraged not to pursue "the things of the world". For a very long time, the ideological stand of the Church has been abstinence from partisan politics and minimal social interaction with other Christian denominations. However, in recent times, it is observed that after many years of its existence, the church is gradually becoming interested in the socio-economic development of the country and particularly interceding for Nigeria's political stability. The paper also examined the leadership style and teachings of Pastor Kumuyi and his disposition toward National Development. Our findings also indicated the recent interest in education with the establishment of Secondary schools in almost all the state capitals of Nigeria and the location of a Private University named Anchor University in Ayobo, Lagos. In conclusion, the Church, which started as a Fellowship of a few people at the University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria, has become a "big church" within and outside Nigeria. Despite the challenges being witnessed and despite the age of the founder, the church is growing in leaps and bounds.

Keywords: Pastor William Folorunso Kumuyi, Erin Ijesa, Lagos, Education, Ayobo

## Introduction

The history of Christianity in Nigeria is in different phases. The first phase was the introduction of Christianity in Benin and Warri by the Catholic Missionaries in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the mission work failed because of some factors which have been discussed by Eriwo. The missionaries from the European countries spearheaded the Christian missionary work in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Nigeria. The mainline churches, such as the Methodist Church, Church Missionary Society (Anglican), Baptist Church and Roman Catholic Church, played prominent roles in the survival of Christian missionary work in this aspect.<sup>2</sup> The African Church, which seceded from the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) between 1888 and 1917, also form another phase.<sup>3</sup> The emergence of the African Independent Churches (Aladura) from the 1920s, namely the Cherubim and Seraphim Church (C&S), Christ Apostolic Church (C.A.C.), Church of the Lord (Aladura) and Celestial Church of Christ (C.C.C.), these churches are also recognised as another group of Churches.<sup>4</sup> The latest phase in the history of Churches in Nigeria today is the Pentecostal or Charismatic churches. They are found in all the nooks and crannies of the country. According to Ojo, "Pentecostals and Charismatics are Christians seeking a deeper experience of God beyond regular church attendance. They rely on the "new birth" and the power of the Holy Spirit."<sup>5</sup> An example of the Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria is the Deeper Life Bible Church which is to be considered in this paper.

The Deeper Christian Life Ministry, or Deeper Bible Christian Church as it may be used interchangeably, started in Lagos in 1981. However, the Church started as a Christian Ministry in 1973. The Church celebrated her 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in August 2023 with pomps and pageantry. It was founded by Pastor William Folorunso Kumuyi, a former Lecturer at the Department of Mathematics, University of Lagos, Lagos.<sup>6</sup> He started the Christian Fellowship with a group of fifteen people who were mostly students in the Institution.

The objective of this paper is to throw more light on the earlier studies on the Church with reference to recent trends in the church. We are aware that some scholars like M.A. Ojo, S.A. Owoeye, D. Ogungbile, M. Ogunewu and Alan Isaacson have written on the early development of the Church. However, there are some corrections to be made to the earlier submissions. A recent study has shown that some earlier comments and positions of the Church and its members on the religious, political and socio-economic life in Nigeria are gradually changing from the fundamental interpretation of the Bible to the realities of the Nigerian situation. The Church is being re-positioned to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The new development is of interest in this work.

### **A Brief Background of the Founder of the Church –Pastor W.F. Kumuyi**

The history of the Deeper Life Bible Church cannot be separated from the life history of Pastor William Folorunso Kumuyi. Ojo corroborates this by saying that "the establishment of the Deeper Life centres on its founder, W.F. Kumuyi".<sup>7</sup> In a similar vein, Ogungbile also says that "what is intriguing about the Deeper Life is the imposing personality of Pastor Kumuyi on the members of his movement".<sup>8</sup> He is the *de jure* and *de facto* of the church.

Pastor W.F. Kumuyi is an indigene of Erin Ijesa, a town in Oriade Local Government of Osun State, Nigeria.<sup>9</sup> He was born on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1941 in the town before his parents went on textile merchandise as *Osomalo* to Orunwa in the Ijebu Division of the present Ogun State. This is contrary to a position by Ojo and Ogunewu, which says that he was born in Orunwa.<sup>10</sup> His father was Gabriel Kumuyi Akinfenwa, and his mother was Mrs. Comfort Kumuyi. The extended family name in the town is Akinfenwa. Some of the notable people in the family are the late Senator Mojisoluwa Akinfenwa, a former Commissioner for

Education in the regime of the late Chief Bola Ige in the old Oyo State, Mr. Johnson Omotoso Akinleye, a former Managing Director of the Union Bank(PLC) and Mr. Jeremiah Akinfenwa, a retired Secondary School Principal and a community leader in the town.<sup>11</sup>

Pa Gabriel Kumuyi was a member of the Christ Anglican Church, Erin Ijesa. In fact, he was buried at the Church cemetery. Of recent, Rt. Rev. Professor Dapo Asaju, the Bishop of the Diocese of Ilesa, renovated his grave with marble as a point of honour for the deceased.

At the introduction of Christianity to the town in 1897, majority of the extended Akinfenwa family joined the Christ Anglican Church, Erin Ijesa, which was the only historical church in the community before the end of the 19th century. Today, some of the family members are found in other mainline churches, so also in different African Independent Churches and Pentecostal Churches within and outside the country. In fact, Akinfenwa family members are playing prominent roles in the propagation of Christianity in the community in general and the development of Christ Anglican Church, Erin Ijesa in particular. The late Senator Mojisoluwa Akinfenwa demolished the old Church and built a new church named after his mother.<sup>12</sup> Chief Omotoso John Akinleye, another prominent member of the family, donated an Ultra-Modern Event Hall to the Church. It was dedicated by the Bishop of the Diocese, Rt. Rev.Prof. Asaju.

The parents of Pastor Kumuyi left Erin Ijesa in pursuit of economic well-being as *Osomalo* so as to take part in the popular Ijesa textile trade. According to Omole, the term *Osomalo* was “originally considered as a term of abuse to characterise the aggressive Ijesa textile traders. The word “Osomalo” is tied to the process of debt collection. It means “I will not sit until I have collected my money”<sup>13</sup>, showing an inflexible determination to succeed in the face of all odds”. Ogungbile explicates further: “The word *Osomalo* is a contraction of “Oso ni maa lo ki mo fi a gboo mi loni” meaning, “I shall remain squatting until I have collected the debt owed me (my money) not later than today.” He went further to say that “the practice of *Osomalo*, which resembles a kind of hire purchase dealing, required serious tactfulness, stubbornness, arrogance, perseverance, calculation, doggedness and adaptability”.<sup>14</sup> Ademowo quotes Olowokure thus:

The main occupation of Ijesa is trading, and this has made them adventurers. Throughout the length and breadth of Nigeria, many Ijesa sons are found with their textile goods, going from one village to another, selling their wares. They are usually referred to as *Osomalo*. These people are reputed to be responsible for the introduction of crude hire purchases into the country.<sup>15</sup>

Some of the positive qualities in “*Osomalo*” seem to have rubbed on Pastor W.F. Kumuyi. Such “*Osomalo*” qualities as indefatigability and doggedness are seen in Pastor Kumuyi. They have led to the success story of the Deeper Life Bible Church, led by an unassuming Ijesa born Pastor. The positive traits are not restricted to Pastor Kumuyi. Other Ijesa Aladura/Pentecostal church leaders that have demonstrated the above qualities in their Christian callings are: late Prophet Timothy Obadare, Evangelist Kayode Abiara (Ibadan), Prophet S.A Owoeye (Ibadan), Pastor (Dr) Odunlami Orioke (Ile-Ife), Prophet Samuel Asolo(Lagos), late Prophet S.A Fakeye (C&S Lagos) and of course Pastor Enock Adejare Adeboye, the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God).<sup>16</sup>

Pastor Kumuyi was married to the late Mrs.Biodun Kumuyi and blessed with two children, namely: Jeremiah and John.<sup>17</sup> After the demise of the woman, he got married to another woman named Esther Kumuyi.

According to Kumuyi, he has two siblings, which is contrary to the claim of Ojo that they are five in the family.<sup>18</sup> However, Ojo's claim was received from Kumuyi's late mother in Erin Ijesa. The apparent contradiction could perhaps be explained by the definition of sibling in a Yoruba context. We are aware that the last surviving child of the family is known as Idowu. Where is Taye and Kehinde? If this question is answered, probably that would account for the five children the mother of Pastor Kumuyi mentioned above.

### **Educational Background of Pastor Kumuyi**

Pastor W.F. Kumuyi began his educational career in a primary school in Orunwa and attended Mayflower Secondary School, Ikenne, Ogun state, for both his Secondary and Higher School Certificate programmes.<sup>19</sup> He went to the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, for a degree in Mathematics. He successfully completed the degree in First Class Honours in 1967. He was offered a teaching appointment at Mayflower Secondary School. Thereafter, he went for a Diploma programme in Education so as to be regarded as a professional and qualified teacher in 1971. He was later given an appointment as a Lecturer at the College of Education, University of Lagos. He remained a lecturer at the Department of Mathematics at the University of Lagos until he voluntarily retired in 1983 so as to take up full ministerial work as the founder and General Overseer of the Deeper Life Bible Church.

### **Factors that are responsible for the growth of the Deeper Life Bible Church**

It is necessary to note that Pastor Kumuyi started his Christian life as a member of the Anglican Church. In fact, he was born in the denomination. He also had an experience of his Christian life in the Apostolic Faith Church in Ikenne in 1964. According to Ojo, "He has often dated the beginning of his Christian life to that event of 1964".<sup>20</sup> The teaching of the Apostolic Faith has a tremendous impact and effect on his teachings as a General Overseer of Deeper Life Bible Church. He continued his membership of the Apostolic Faith until he was expelled because he did not follow the doctrine of the church wholeheartedly. For example, it is forbidden for a non-ordained member to preach and teach in the Apostolic Faith Church.

As a Bible study leader on the campus of the University, he started the fellowship in his residence allocated to him on the campus. However, when the space available was too small for the members of the group, he decided to move to a Church auditorium owned by the Redeemed Christian Church of God under the leadership of Pastor Josiah Akindayomi, the founder of the Redeemed Christian Church of God. According to Oleru, "Papa also made his church and all the facilities available to Pastor Kumuyi and his teeming crowd. As a result, their weekly Bible Study was moved out of campus to RCCG facilities at Ebute Metta".<sup>21</sup>

### **The Charisma of W.F. Kumuyi**

The personality of the founder of Deeper Life Bible Church is a factor in the rapid growth of the church. His level of education and status assisted him in the effective teaching and proclamation of the gospel. According to him, he would "like to reach the people that nobody is reaching at the moment – the people at the top such as politicians, national leaders, the movers and shakers, the decision makers in the various countries – it is my passion that the truth we have will reach them".<sup>22</sup> He has been doing so successfully because of his education and level of recognition by the society. In our earlier study on "Charisma as a phenomenon in the Growth and Expansion of Pentecostal Churches in Ilorin, Kwara State", we observed that "Human society is a dynamic organisation. If the society is to be progressive, humane and visionary, there is a need for purposeful, dedicated, courageous, honest and determined leaders".<sup>23</sup> These qualities are adequately found in Pastor Kumuyi. He is committed to his conviction and the propagation of his ideals in spite of the fact that many people believe that the doctrines of the church are hard and difficult to accept.

The traits of an Ijesa man found in him have assisted in the growth of the church. Ogunbile highlights the traits in the following words:

What is intriguing about the Deeper Life is the imposing personality of Pastor Kumuyi on the members of the movement. At the nascent state of the movement, there were prescriptions on the mode and pattern of dressing for both male and female members. This was a strong identification of his “holiness message” which was a condition for being a “true believer”, fit for the kingdom of God. Many who felt that the prescriptions were too hard would not join the group. However, the Ijesa traits in William to go it alone in spite of rejection and his unwavering conviction and dogged determination led to the success of the church, which is now one of the leading evangelical movements in Nigeria. Pastor Kumuyi designed the ministry according to his own focus and vision, making it unique in form and practice. Many who were later persuaded and motivated by Kumuyi’s commitment joined the movement”.<sup>24</sup>

Also, Ogunewu quotes Isaacson that “the early history of Deeper Life is very much the personal story of W.F. Kumuyi”.<sup>27</sup> He is seen as somebody who lives according to the words of God. His comportment and deep knowledge of the gospel attracted many people to him. In fact, Pastor Kumuyi said that the name of the Church was fashioned by the people who were attending his Bible study because of the way he was teaching them. The people said, “We have been Christians before, but this one is deeper than what we used to know”. According to Kumuyi, “The style of teaching was a very important factor. At the time, it was new to a lot of people to go systematically from verse to verse and pinpoint practical lessons applied to their lives, and their lives were really changing – people became born again, their lives were transformed, families got better transformed, families got better united.”<sup>28</sup> This type of teaching was rare in those days.

A close observation of the church brings out certain salient changes in the church. In a recent survey on the spread of the church in West Africa, Baffour Ankomah says, “Seeing it at a close range on a recent reporting trip to Togo, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, it would be foolish of us to pretend that no such revolution is happening or that it is not relevant to the lives of so many millions of our compatriots”<sup>25</sup> He also recorded that the church is found in over 40 African countries and 20 other countries outside Africa – from Russia to Ukraine, Hong Kong to India, Jamaica to Irish Republic, USA to Canada, UK to France, Italy to Austria, Germany to Malta, Holland to Philippines. Ojo says that the church “has spread far beyond Nigeria, and on the continent of Africa is found in Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Sao Tome and Principe, Lesotho, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Kenya, Togo, Cameroon and Zimbabwe. Beyond Africa, there are branches in Britain, USA, Spain, India and the Philippines”.<sup>26</sup>

### **Deeper Life Easter and Christmas Annual Retreats**

As Church historians, we believe that Pastor Kumuyi must have read much about the strategies of church planting. Even though he did not attend a conventional Bible School or Seminary, he effectively made use of mission strategies in the quick spread of the Deeper Life Bible Church. His strategy of introducing the Easter and Christmas retreats with free feeding, accommodation and transportation, which he started in 1975, was a boost to the growth of the church.<sup>29</sup> In a country where many people are poor and cannot afford three daily square meals, the annual Easter and Christmas retreats are opportunities to be fed free of charge and hear the words of God. In the Synoptic gospels, it is recorded that Jesus Christ fed five thousand people (Matthew 14:15-21), and in another story, he fed four thousand people free of charge.

(Matthew 15:32-38) We believe that the method adopted by Pastor Kumuyi must have attracted many “poor” people to the church. The programme has become an annual event since 1975. It has spread to all Deeper Life Bible Church branches in Nigeria. The serene environments in which the programmes are held always give room for total devotion and dedication to the programme. According to Ojo, “the retreats and the strategies utilised to make them a success brought Deeper Life to public attention.”<sup>30</sup> The use of posters and jingles on radio and television often draws the attention of the people to the church. Those who attend the annual retreats are apostles of the church by propagating the ideals of the church to the general public.

A common and attracting feature in the Pentecostal churches is the use of the English language as a medium of communication in their churches. This has attracted many young University, Polytechnic and College of Education students and graduates into the Church. In fact, many of their Pastors are young graduates who are articulate, agile and committed to the spread of the gospel.

### **Emphasis on Effective Evangelism**

In the Synoptic gospels, the Lord Jesus Christ emphasised the propagation of the gospel. He instructed His disciples to continue with the extension of the gospel. For instance, in Matthew 28:19-20 he says, “Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age”. The Deeper Life Church has a total obedience and commitment to this command of Jesus. The members of the church are regularly reminded at Fellowships and prayer meetings of the mandate of Jesus. Incidentally, the first book to be written by Pastor Kumuyi is on Evangelism. In spite of the old age of the founder (82 years as of 2023), he is seen in different parts of Nigeria and other parts of the World on evangelisation tours. The members of the church are seen daily moving from one street to another, distributing tracts and pamphlets and preaching from home to home. People are encouraged to run away from sins and accept Jesus. He underscores the importance of evangelism in one of his books:

Soul winning is the greatest work you can ever be involved in. It is the most rewarding enterprise you undertake. It is a work that gives joy. In this life, and brings reward in the world to come. It is a work of the greatest consequence ... Soul winning turns those who are reached from sin unto righteousness and holiness. It is a work of eternal value. <sup>31</sup>

We also find another quotation that is relevant to this work thus:

Others may be devoted to business, higher education, bearing many children or politics, my call is to preach the kingdom of God. You must tell your colleagues in the office, students in the schools, and your customers in the market. Was your plan before conversion to build houses, buy cars, have many children or visit European capitals ...? You cannot cling to your pet ambitions and profess to be committed to evangelism”. If you are going to the great commission, everything within you, and around you, must be launched into that great commission ... You must be so committed to the great commission as to feel that a great thing is missing in your life if you are not evangelising. Preach the gospel every day. Let no day pass without contributing to the fulfilment of the great commission ... You must be willing to make any sacrifice for the salvation of souls. You should get

to the point where you count no journey too long, no mountain too high to climb, no expense too much to make, in order to reach a soul.<sup>32</sup>

The above quotations are some of the teachings of Pastor Kumuyi that make the members of the church to be committed to evangelism wherever they are found. The members have been taught the importance of keeping to time. They are encouraged to be at worship before the commencement of the programme. In view of this, they are seen running so as not to be late for any service.

### **Healing and Miracles**

Generally, one of the features of any Pentecostal Church in Nigeria is a claim to heal those who are sick. The healings are seen as miracles which are beyond human comprehension and understanding. According to Pastor Kumuyi, "But for me to get into healing ministry, I went into the Bible and really learned from it. I also studied other ministers in the healing ministry and prayed until the Lord began to manifest it in my life."<sup>33</sup> Many instances of divine healings and miracles are mentioned in some of the books and pamphlets written by Pastor Kumuyi. There is a weekly programme titled "Revival and Miracle Hour". The programme is held every Thursday in Ilorin at 5.00 pm. We observed that people from other denominations and even Muslims do attend the programme. The exercise is a good avenue to have converts to the Church. People are seen giving testimonies of the goodness of God in their lives. Prayer is highly emphasised for any miracle to take place in the life of any expectant. It is believed that with God, all things are possible. Kumuyi always emphasise that

It does not take God one hour to heal a person. It does not take God one whole month to make a barren woman pregnant. It does not take a long time to give a job to the jobless, or to give prosperity to the poor. It is sin that delays our blessings. If God says he will heal you, you will not die of sickness; if God says he will give you children, you will not remain barren. Whatever God says, He will fulfil it. God has not forgotten you. He will bless you. He will take your problems away. If you are blind, sick, lame, barren, jobless, tired and dead spiritually, hear and believe the word of God as its is coming forth from my mouth, and the power of God will touch you ...If you are sick and I command the sickness to stop the sickness will stop. The man of God is not just saying his own words. His pronouncements are from God above.<sup>34</sup>

The church also emphasises holiness and sanctification in its teachings. Sanctification is a pre-condition for miracles to take place. According to Ojo, "Sanctification is described as godliness and Christliness or "being like Jesus Christ in heart, attitude, disposition, motive and in action".<sup>35</sup> The acceptance of this position makes the Deeper Life members to run away from things of the world.

### **Intra Religious Participation**

At the beginning of the church, members were encouraged not to partake in partisan politics, which is seen to be "dirty" and ungodly in Nigeria. Apart from being apolitical, they are not encouraged to fellowship with other Christians in other denominations. For example, my experience at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, University of Ibadan, Ibadan and University of Ilorin, Ilorin, has shown that they are not part of the students' Christian Fellowships. According to Kumuyi, "After God told us what he will do, He tells us what we should do. We are to come out from among people who will defile us. We should be separate. It is some

years since I came across this passage that instructs me to come out from among people that will defile me; from among habits that destroy and defile”.<sup>36</sup> Some people believe that DLBC started the “balkanisation” of the big campus Christian Unions when their members pulled out to form their campus fellowships.

### Written Books and Pamphlets

Pastor Kumuyi has demonstrated the importance of education as a prolific writer. He has written many books, pamphlets and articles in national dailies to promote the word of God. These materials are also an opportunity to attract people to the church. As earlier mentioned, he wrote his first book in 1975. Ogunewu in his work listed the following books as written by Kumuyi: Have Compassion on them (1975); Lord Increase Our Faith (1977); Job and Divine Healing (1977); The Secret Place (1982); Examine Yourself (1982); Marriage: The Christian Option (1982); 3D's of Failure and 4D's of Success (1983); Holiness Made Easy (1983); Complete Bible Study Series in One Volume (1983); Our Place, Position and Power in Christ (1983); Prayer Made Easy (1985); Freedom from Fear (1985); The Essentials of Christian Living (1985); Key to Happiness (1986); How to Win in Crisis (1986); All Things are Possible (1986); Adultery Forbidden (1986); How to receive Divine Healing (1986); The Spirit Controlled Family (1987); The Unforgettable Encounter (1988); The Overcomer (1988); Sanctification: A Christian Experience (1988); Divine Blueprint for Spiritual Growth (1988); God's Answers to Man's Questions (1989); The Key to Revival (1989); Rescue the Perishing (1989); Call to Commitment (1989); The Holy Spirit (1989); Eternity Is Near (1989); God's Word in a Changing World (1989); The Great White Throne Judgment (1989); Principles of Christian Discipleship (1989); The Lord is my Shepherd (1990); Curses and Cure (1990); The Hour of Decision (1990); How to know God's will in Marriage (1990); The Heartbeat of the Almighty (1990); The Power that Never Fails (1991); Hope for Our Generation (1991); Break the Fallow Ground (1991); Standing on the Promises (1991); The Good Fight of Faith (1993); Marriage and Family Life-Getting the Best (1993); The Old Landmark in Modern Times (1994); Riches of Prayer (1994); Victory over Witchcraft (1994); The Signs of His Coming (1995); The Believers in the Last Days (1995); God's 3 Fold Invitation (1995); Power for the Youth (1996); Gems from Jude (1996); Jonah (1996); Power of Old (1996); One Indispensable Step to Full Salvation (1996); Esther (1996); Hannah (1996); Jezebel (1996); Ruth (1996); Priscilla (1996); conquering through Christ (1997); The Samaritan Woman (1997); My Message to Christian Workers (1997); Mary (1997); The Lord is My Security (1998); The Lord is my Strength (1998); The Roman's Road to Salvation (1998); The Truly liberated Woman (2000); Woman's Ministry In the Church and in the World (2000): The Vision of Spirit-filled Women (2000); Changed Women Equipped to Change the World (2000); Following Jesus (2003); ABC of Ministering Healing and Deliverance (2003); Sermon Outlines for Pastors and Preachers Vol. One (2003); Systematic and Expository Study on the Book of Hebrews (2003); Sermon Outlines for Pastors Vol. Two (2004); Sanctification: The Sanctified Life (n.d.); Sanctification: Keeping the Blessing (n.d.).<sup>37</sup>

The above books that are written by Pastor Kumuyi are to show that many books have been credited to him. In addition to writing books, he is a guest writer in some Nigerian daily papers. For instance, he has regular columns in The Guardian, Tribune and the Nation. These write-ups proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in general and encourage people to go to the nearest Deeper Life Church to worship. In other words, it is an opportunity to publicise the church.

The late wife of Pastor Kumuyi was in charge of the women's ministry with a monthly magazine publication titled The Christian Mirror, with a designation “the magazine for building godly women”<sup>38</sup>. In the course of this research, I discovered that the magazine is also bought and read by Christian women in other denominations. In fact, there are some Muslim women who love reading the magazine because of the



moral teachings and encouragement of women on family issues. Miracles and testimonies and coming events are publicized in the magazine monthly. Apart from the Christian Mirror, there is also the Life Magazine, captioned “the magazine for the victorious life”.<sup>39</sup> Its publication started in 1989. There is also a magazine titled Youth Life. This is specifically meant for the young ones in the church, most especially students in tertiary institutions. They are encouraged to write articles and update themselves on upcoming events in the church. The Tender Life magazine is meant for the children in the church. The students on campuses also publish Campus Pearl magazine. Events of the church within and outside the campus are published for their members to read. These publications, therefore, are meant to educate and teach the Christian gospel in the understanding of the gospel. There are also two daily devotional books: Daily Manna, which is for adults and Higher Everyday, for the young members of the church.

### **The Use of Electronic Media**

Akhillomen, Owoeye and Omotoye attest to the effective use of modern technology and science in the propagation of the gospel. According to Akhillomen, “It is now a well-established fact that one of the miracles of science and technology in the last century was the invention of the television communication system”<sup>40</sup>. According to Owoeye, “preaching on radio and television started in the early 70’s with a few movements, such as C.A.C. Koseunti, which metamorphosed into the World Soul Winning Evangelistic Ministry (W.O.S.E.M.) led by the charismatic leader, Reverend Timothy Oluwole Obadare.”<sup>41</sup> Other churches that featured on radio, according to Owoeye, are the Victory Life Church, the Christ Second Coming, and the Living Faith Church. The Deeper Life Bible Church features on Radio Osun for thirty minutes. Pastor Kumuyi features on Kwara radio every Sunday between 2.00-2. 30 pm. According to Ogunewu, the Deeper Life was aired on Radio Nigeria, Lagos on Sundays between 8.00-9.00 pm. “However it was terminated in the year 2000 because the programme did not yield the expected result”<sup>42</sup>. Omotoye believes that the churches are “able to reach thousands of believers and unbelievers through this medium. This is a great improvement on the oral or house to house evangelism”.<sup>43</sup>

After the introduction of radio evangelism, it was followed by televangelism. On a global scope, it was popularized by Oral Roberts, an American Pentecostal Evangelist and University founder in the 1950’s. According to the *Nelson’s New Christian Dictionary* as quoted by Akhillomen, Oral Roberts “made early use of radio and expanded into television in 1954”<sup>44</sup>. Televangelism was started by the late Archbishop B.S. Idahosa in Nigeria “through the Nigerian Television Station in the then Mid-West Region” now Edo and Delta states with an hour devoted to “hour of redemption”<sup>45</sup>. Many Pentecostal Pastors are featuring on television so as to propagate the gospel. Omotoye said “Pastor George Adegboye, Pastor Joseph Mohammed Alli and Pastor M.R. Popoola are always on the Nigerian Television, Ilorin every Sunday”<sup>46</sup>.

The use of television to propagate the gospel in the Deeper Life is too controversial even among the members of the church. This is as a result of the position or comments of the founder on the use of television by the members of the church. He was quoted to have said:

We teach that if people want to keep their sanctification experience, their holiness of spirit, the programmes on the television will not help them at all. In any home where you see it, you will only know that that person is acting to the Word of God, which he received in the fellowship...You as a Christian don’t need TV to be converted now. TV outreach is to sinners, not Christians. We maintain that TV is one of the things of the world, so you will not be misled into comparing yourself with others, saying that, afterall, the thing is not bad.”<sup>47</sup>

There are two schools of thought on the interpretation of the above statement credited to Pastor Kumuyi. The first is: Why was he making use of the television to propagate the gospel some years ago? Some believe that he was mis-quoted on the issue. Pastor Kumuyi was seen preaching on Lagos Television and Nigerian Television Authority in the past. However, the exercise was discontinued because of criticisms from the members and non-members alike. In fact, some members of the church went to an extent of destroying or selling of their televisions in obedience to the teaching of the church. At the same time some members believe that television is important for education and evangelization of the general public.

Even though the church hierarchy rejects televangelism, it has a transmission network which is assisting the church in the propagation of the gospel. The introduction of Life transmission network has assisted the church in its growth and development. The General Overseer is seen on screen every Monday at 5.00pm preaching to the members of the church irrespective of the location of the church in Nigeria and worldwide. It is an opportunity to listen to the word as being preached by the founder of the church. Many non-members are found in such gatherings, and it has led to phenomenal growth of the church. The Life transmission of programmes from the headquarters of the church in Ayobo, Lagos is also done during annual retreats and revivals. Members of the church in the hinterland are not necessarily expected to go to Lagos for such programmes any longer. This is to reduce congestion during such programmes and minimize accidents on Nigerian roads.

The Deeper Life Church is also noted for the use of Video-Cassettes in the propagation of the gospel. The recorded sermons of Pastor Kumuyi are relayed to the people regularly at services by making use of projectors on the screen. People are encouraged to buy for use at home and for friends. It has been of great assistance in the spread of the gospel.

### **Establishment of Schools**

One of the strategies of conversion which the Christian missionaries adopted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and developed by the Mainline, Aladura Churches and some Pentecostal Churches is in the establishment of Schools. According to Ade Ajayi "The school was Crowther's chief method of evangelization. He introduced the mission into new places by getting rulers and elders interested in the idea of having a school of their own, and usually it was to the school that he asked the senior missionary at each station to give his chief attention"<sup>48</sup>. Unfortunately, the Deeper Life started late in this regard. Ojo quotes Kumuyi thus: "Others may be devoted to business, higher education, bearing many children or politics, my call is to preach the kingdom of God"<sup>49</sup>. This theology of the founder who is the *de facto* and *de jure* of the church is affecting the church in this regard. However, there is a gradual and progressive establishment of primary and secondary schools. A Private University named Anchor University was established in Ayobo, Lagos. Deeper Life Churches at the state levels were mandated to start at least a secondary school in a state. This has since commenced. In Kwara State, a Deeper Life Secondary school is established at Eyenkorin, Ilorin, along old Ogbomoso road. In Oyo state, a Deeper Life Secondary school is located on Ibadan –Oyo express road. In Ogun state, one is sited at Osiele, near Federal College of Education.

### **Challenges of the Deeper Life Church**

The Deeper Life Bible church as earlier mentioned is presently personified by the founder of the church, Pastor W.F. Kumuyi. From our investigation, he is the sole author of all the books written by the church. In order words, no other pastor is permitted to write for the church! The weekly Monday teaching is handled by him alone. All pastors and members of the church are on-lookers. Therefore, the initiatives of the members are not permitted. Pastor Kumuyi is about eighty-two years of age and one would think that the

issue of successor may eventually be a problem for the church in future. This is a general problem in many Pentecostal churches. Pastor Kumuyi has this to say on succession “The Lord will work out whoever eventually becomes my successor”<sup>50</sup>. This kind of an answer is hypothetical. Leadership crisis normally follow after the demise of church founders in many Pentecostal churches.

The late venture of the church into the establishment of schools like primary, secondary and of course University was due to the fact that the founder of the church was not interested in such institutions until of recent. It took the church over three decades before a decision was taken to establish a secondary school in each state capital! There is an adage that it is better late than never!

It is just of recent that the founder is showing interest in the activities of Christian Organizations, such as the Christian Association of Nigeria (C.A.N.) and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria. In the past, the General Overseer was only interested in preaching about the Kingdom of God. Today, he is seen in some National Christian programmes where prayers are said for national peace and development. The church as a body is not seen to be showing the same interest.

There is a need for Pastor Kumuyi to re- consider the position of the church about the use of television by members of the church. It is believed that science and technology are essential tools in this age of globalization towards the spreading of the gospel. Our investigation reveals two opposing camps in the church who have interpreted his position differently on this issue. The traditional members believe that there is a need to shift from the earlier position to accommodate some modern trends in Christianity. We believe that the vision of Pastor Kumuyi at the inception of the church regarding the use of television may not be tenable and acceptable to the youths of today in the church.

Another area that may need to be re-considered is in the area of partisan politics. The members of the church are taught to be apolitical. In our interviews, some members of the church said that non-involvement of members in Nigerian politics is a dis-service to the nation. They are of the opinion that the virtues and teachings of Jesus Christ should be taken to partisan politics so as to have good governance in the country. In view of the above observations, we may not be surprised in some years to come or after the demise of Pastor Kumuyi for schism to take place in the church on doctrinal issues.

A visit to Erin Ijesa, the hometown of the founder of Deeper Life Bible Church indicates that his presence is not felt in the town. There is no befitting Deeper Life Bible Church in the town and the members of the church are not many as expected. Also, there is no Deeper Life Bible Church School in the town. Many members of the community interviewed are expecting a time when the town will benefit from the socio-economic life of the church in terms of the establishment of primary, secondary and even a university in the town.

## **Conclusion**

The Deeper Life Bible Church which started as a small Christian Bible fellowship group at the University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos in 1973, has grown phenomenally with branches in the nooks and crannies of Nigeria. Branches are also found in West African countries, European countries, and America. The church has been consistent in the preaching of holiness and sanctification. This has contributed to the spiritual growth of the country. The founder is often invited by the Christian Association of Nigeria (C.A.N.) and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (P.F.N.) to pray for the country when there is a need to do so. The church has lately suddenly developed interest in the establishment of primary and secondary schools and the establishment of a proposed university in Abuja. We believe that it is a way of contributing to national development. However, there is a need for the church to re-examine its stand on the use of television. It is useful for the

propagation of the gospel. At least, it is useful to reach the unreached in the nooks and crannies of the nation. The members of the church should be encouraged to take active part in partisan politics, so as to take the moral teachings of Jesus Christ as taught in the church to Nigerian politics. We believe that such people should be the light of the world and be good ambassadors of Jesus Christ. The issue of a successor is also paramount in order to avoid schism after the demise of the founder.

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