




An Indigenous Force of Pentecostalism in Africa: Indigenous Knowledge System Approach to Decolonization

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ABSTRACT

Pentecostalism in Africa has many expressions, types, and shadows contributing to the challenge of categorisations in the movement. There are some forms of Pentecostalism in Africa that resemble the American context in terms of theology and practice. However, the literature review also demonstrates that other forms are uniquely indigenous, meaning, non-American. In this article, the indigenous force of Pentecostalism was studied through the indigenous knowledge system approach. This was done by making links between indigenous Pentecostalism in Africa and the early indigenous forces. The indigenous Pentecostal liturgy characterized by a song, prayer, and sermon was discussed in detail. The article also demonstrated how the indigenisation of the gospel of Jesus Christ within the Pentecostal movement in Africa has made the movement relevant to Africans. The aim was to demonstrate that the indigenous force of Pentecostalism is relevant to the decolonisation of Westernized Christianity. The article proposes the acknowledgement of the indigenous knowledge system in the Pentecostal tradition which is relevant to the decolonization of the religious sphere in the African context.

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INTRODUCTION

Pentecostalism is comprised of different types of sub-traditions such as classical Pentecostalism, neo-Pentecostalism, and other charismatic movements.¹ Classical Pentecostal churches have links with American Pentecostalism particularly the Azusa Street Revival, in Los Angeles, United States of America. Some of the classical Pentecostal churches in South Africa for example have direct links with American Pentecostalism,² while others have an indirect link with the same. Similarly, the neo-Pentecostal and other charismatic movements in Africa have links with the faith movement of E.W. Kenyon, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, and others.³ Some of the neo-Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Africa do receive sponsorship and donations from the American Pentecostal churches or movements.⁴ However, several other Pentecostal sub-

¹ Mookgo Solomon Kgatle, "Peculiarities in the Pentecostal Tradition: Disciplinary and Decolonial Perspectives in a South African Context," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 43, no. 1 (2022): 2519.

² Allan Anderson, "The Azusa Street Revival and the Emergence of Pentecostal Missions in the Early Twentieth Century," *Transformation* 23, no. 2 (2006): 107–18; Allan Heaton Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

³ Marius Nel, "Church and War: A Change in Hermeneutical Stance among Pentecostals," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 38, no. 1 (2017): 1–8.

⁴ Marleen De Witte, "The Spectacular and the Spirits: Charismatics and Neo-Traditionalists on Ghanaian Television," *Material Religion* 1, no. 3 (2005): 314–34.

strands in Africa do not have links with American Pentecostalism. These movements are also known as non-Azusa. There are African independent Pentecostal churches that were started by African pastors for Africans.⁵ These churches do not have any link with the Azusa Street revival or not even the faith movement. But they have been started independently by Africans, hence they found resonance with many Africans.

This article probes indigenous Pentecostalism in an African context to demonstrate that the indigenisation of the Pentecostal movement is relevant to the decolonization of the Western expression of Christianity. In other words, the indigenous expression of the Pentecostal movement in Africa makes it a relevant movement for decolonisation. The indigenous knowledge system as a theoretical framework will be introduced to apply it to the indigenization of Pentecostalism. The article will also make links between the Pentecostal movement in South Africa and other indigenous religions in Africa. The Indigenous liturgy in the form of song, prayer, and sermons will be discussed in comparison to the Western forms of liturgy. This article will also point out that Africans do not change the gospel but present it in a way that is relevant in an African context. All these factors are important when seeking to demonstrate that the indigenous Pentecostal movement is relevant for the decolonization of the Western expressions of the Christian tradition in Africa. The next section introduces the African indigenous knowledge system as an approach for decolonization to apply it to indigenous Pentecostalism.

African Indigenous Knowledge System

The African Indigenous knowledge system is an approach that values the cultural context into consideration in the development of knowledge. This means that knowledge is not general but it depends on the local context in which it is developed. Therefore, this approach recognizes the African people and their context in the development of knowledge. In addition, this approach recognizes the experiences of the people in Africa as these are important to knowledge formulations.⁶ Africans cannot develop knowledge outside the context in which they are found as knowledge should recognise their environment, experiences, and cultural dimensions.⁷ This means that the cultural experiences that Africans have had over the years should be taken into consideration in the African indigenous knowledge system.⁸ Anything that seeks to suggest that the African cultural experiences are pagan, should be discouraged and condemned in the framework of the African indigenous knowledge system. It is also important that Africans themselves are proud of their own African cultural experiences and promote them to other cultures particularly, Western cultures. It is also the responsibility of Africans to revive the cultural experiences that have been ignored for many years.⁹ This will help in ensuring that the development of knowledge in an African context is done in conjunction with African cultural experiences.¹⁰

There should not be an excuse that the African Indigenous knowledge system has not been written or publicized, it is still important knowledge.¹¹ African Indigenous knowledge does not only recognize the cultural aspect but also the oral culture as the stories of African knowledge were told orally. Although this knowledge has not been developed through cognitive learning, it should be recognized through the incorporation of oral stories that have been told for many years.¹² The African story although it has not been written down, has been told as a narrative using oral cultures.¹³ Abah explains:

⁵ Allan Anderson, "The Newer Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches: The Shape of Future Christianity in Africa?," *Pneuma* 24, no. 2 (2002): 167–84; Allan Anderson, "New African Initiated Pentecostalism and Charismatics in South Africa," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 35, no. 1 (2005): 66–92.

⁶ J Abah, P Mashebe, and D D Denuga, "Prospect of Integrating African Indigenous Knowledge Systems into the Teaching of Sciences in Africa," *American Journal of Educational Research* 3, no. 6 (2015): 668–73.

⁷ Amos Saurombe, "The Teaching of Indigenous Knowledge as a Tool for Curriculum Transformation and Africanisation," *Journal of Education* 138 (2018): 160.

⁸ J Chukwueren, "From Decolonisation to Digitalisation of Education in South Africa," *International Journal of Science and Research* 73, no. 12/1 (2017).

⁹ Chukwueren, "From Decolonisation to Digitalisation of Education in South Africa," 235.

¹⁰ Gloria Emeagwali and Edward Shizha, *African Indigenous Knowledge and the Sciences: Journeys into the Past and Present* (Springer, 2016); Edmore Mutekwe, "Towards an Africa Philosophy of Education for Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Africa," *Creative Education* 6, no. 12 (2015): 1294; M B Ogunniyi, "The Challenge of Preparing and Equipping Science Teachers in Higher Education to Integrate Scientific and Indigenous Knowledge Systems for Learners: The Practice of Higher Education," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 18, no. 3 (2004): 289–304.

¹¹ Chukwueren, "From Decolonisation to Digitalisation of Education in South Africa," 235.

¹² Frances E Owusu-Ansah and Gubela Mji, "African Indigenous Knowledge and Research," *African Journal of Disability* 2, no. 1 (2013): 1–5.

¹³ Chukwueren, "From Decolonisation to Digitalisation of Education in South Africa," 236.

In contrast to the aspirations of some Western scientific traditions for universal truths, indigenous epistemologies are narratively anchored in the natural communities characterised by complex kinship systems of relationship among people, animals, the earth, the cosmos, etc. from which knowing originates.¹⁴

These stories have been told from one generation to another, thus maintaining the African knowledge heritage. Therefore, an African indigenous knowledge system pays attention to the oral tradition in Africa in the development of knowledge.

The African Indigenous knowledge system does not mean that knowledge is only derived from African experiences. Knowledge within this approach can be derived elsewhere but it has to be contextualized within the African context. Therefore, an African Indigenous knowledge system has to do with the indigenisation of knowledge coming from other contexts. Therefore, it is important to involve Africans in the construction of knowledge because they are in a better place to tell the real story from their own experiences.¹⁵ This is important in ensuring that knowledge is relevant to the African people and their contexts.¹⁶ This means that the African Indigenous knowledge system is primarily concerned with the context, locality, and surroundings of the people in Africa.¹⁷ Saurombe states, “Indigenous knowledge is uniquely valuable, as it provides insights and information that directly reflect the opinions, values, and attitudes of the local people engaged in a community development initiative.”¹⁸ To indiginise knowledge, the people in Africa and their voices should be heard in the development of knowledge.¹⁹ Therefore, there should be a synergy between those responsible for knowledge production and the context of the people.²⁰ This means that there is a lot to learn from the African people which helps to contextualise knowledge.²¹ Therefore, there is no need to always recycle the Western epistemologies when there is an opportunity to learn from the African contexts.²²

The African Indigenous knowledge system is the knowledge that is relevant for the liberation of the people in Africa. Knowledge should be able to bring liberation and justice to the people, particularly those who have been previously oppressed.²³ This means that knowledge should be able to address the various challenges that people are confronted with in their lives. Knowledge should not maintain the epistemic oppressions of the past but should be able to change the status quo.²⁴ The duty of the African Indigenous knowledge system should be able to confront the injustices of the past. This approach has an assignment to deal with the colonial Western epistemologies to revive the knowledge systems. Rather than an alignment with the colonial powers, there should be a confrontation of the same in the construction of the African Indigenous knowledge system. Summarily, the African indigenous knowledge system in the context of Christianity is known for four aspects. First, it is the acknowledgment of the cultural dimensions of Christianity. Second, it is the oral nature of the expression of the gospel. Third, it is the indigenisation of the gospel. Lastly, the African indigenous knowledge system is relevant to the decolonisation of Western Christian expressions. These four aspects of the African Indigenous knowledge system are discussed in detail below.

¹⁴ Abah, Mashebe, and Denuga, “Prospect of Integrating African Indigenous Knowledge Systems into the Teaching of Sciences in Africa,” 669.

¹⁵ Lesley Le Grange, “Currere’s Active Force and the Africanisation of the University Curriculum,” *South African Journal of Higher Education* 28, no. 4 (2014): 1283–94.

¹⁶ Ronicka Mudaly, “Towards Decolonising a Module in the Pre-Service Science Teacher Education Curriculum: The Role of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Creating Spaces for Transforming the Curriculum,” *Journal of Education (University of KwaZulu-Natal)*, no. 74 (2018): 47–66, 51.

¹⁷ Mudaly, “Towards Decolonising a Module in the Pre-Service Science Teacher Education Curriculum: The Role of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Creating Spaces for Transforming the Curriculum.”

¹⁸ Saurombe, “The Teaching of Indigenous Knowledge as a Tool for Curriculum Transformation and Africanisation,” 37.

¹⁹ Marichen Van der Westhuizen and Thomas Greuel, “Are We Hearing the Voices? Africanisation as Part of Community Development,” *HTS: Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (2017): 1–9.

²⁰ Gift Mheta, Bwalya Nyangu Lungu, and Thaiurie Govender, “Decolonisation of the Curriculum: A Case Study of the Durban University of Technology in South Africa,” *South African Journal of Education* 38, no. 4 (2018).

²¹ Owusu-Ansah and Mji, “African Indigenous Knowledge and Research,” 2.

²² Dennis Banda, “Education for All (EFA) and African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS): The Case of the Chewa People of Zambia.” (University of Nottingham, 2006).

²³ Lesley Le Grange, “Decolonising, Africanising, Indigenising, and Internationalising Curriculum Studies: Opportunities to (Re) Imagine the Field,” *Journal of Education (University of KwaZulu-Natal)*, no. 74 (2018): 4–18.

²⁴ Shana Almeida and Siseko H Kumalo, “(De) Coloniality through Indigeneity: Deconstructing Calls to Decolonise in the South African and Canadian University Contexts,” *Education as Change* 22, no. 1 (2018): 1–24.

Indigenous Pentecostalism's Links with the Cultural Context

Indigenous Pentecostalism can incorporate cultural practices without compromising its religious practices. This means that Christianity in indigenous Pentecostalism is practiced by incorporating cultural context without losing its essence.²⁵ In other words, over the years indigenous Pentecostalism has been able to adapt to an African context by recognizing African cultural practices. Indigenous Pentecostalism can make a distinction between Western cultural practices and Christian practices.²⁶ Hence, they can practice Christianity in the context of their African cultural practices. This is different from the Western missionary churches which have imposed Western culture on African Christians and dismissed African culture as pagan.

The presentation of Christianity as a function of Western civilization made the Christian Gospel excessively Western if one needed to be Western in cultural orientation before one could be a Christian. The identification of Christianity with Western culture made the Christian message unnecessarily foreign to African culture.²⁷

Christianity is not exclusively a Western religion, hence it must familiarize itself with the local cultural contexts of where it is located. Christianity in Africa should be expressed through the African cultural context. This is the importance of the indigenous Pentecostalism which has found a way to express Christianity through the local cultural context. This is also important for balanced Christian practices, particularly in the African context where many people are already rooted in their cultural and traditional practices.

Some of the cultural practices such as ancestral veneration, funeral rites, respect for the elders, and so forth have been demonised by the Western missionary churches including classical Pentecostal churches.²⁸ Ancestral veneration for example has been condemned among classical Pentecostal churches as the worship of gods. But when looking closely at the concept it means the respect for the departed not necessarily their worship. This means that in an African context, we should be able to make a distinction between ancestral commemoration and ancestral worship. Kgatle and Mashau cite biblical examples of ancestral commemoration as opposed to ancestral worship of other gods:

God told the children of Israel to remember Him as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This notion is also repeated in 2 Kings 2:14 when Elisha took Elijah's mantle and asked, Where is the God of Elijah? He was not necessarily worshipping Elijah but remembering the God of Elijah. The remembrance of those who have already departed, especially about the God they served, should not be confused with ancestral worship. Therefore, when one erects a tombstone as a memorial for the next generation, it can be seen as a commemoration.²⁹

While Western missionary churches have struggled over the years to make these distinctions, indigenous Pentecostalism has somehow been able to make a distinction between the cultural practices that are consistent with biblical practices and the ones that are not. Indigenous Pentecostal churches would for example encourage their members to respect the departed and not worship them as that will present some form of ancestral worship. This is just but one example where indigenous Pentecostalism has excelled in acknowledging African cultural and traditional practices without compromising the gospel.

The ability of indigenous Pentecostalism to adapt to cultural practices has grown in the 21st century. Anderson and Tang point out that "one of the main reasons for reasons for the phenomenal growth of Pentecostalism in the past century has been its remarkable ability to adapt itself to different cultural contexts and give authentically contextualized expressions to Christianity."³⁰ This is because indigenous Pentecostalism is easily acceptable among Africans as opposed to Western missionary churches. The reason for this acceptance is the ability of the movement to minister relevantly to the Africans by acknowledging their cultural practices instead of labeling them as pagan. Anderson and Tang continue to say that "Pentecostalism is inherently

²⁵ L. William Oliverio, *Theological Hermeneutics in the Classical Pentecostal Tradition: A Typological Account*, vol. 12 (Brill, 2012).

²⁶ T Falola and D Jean-Jacques, "Africa: An Encyclopedia of Culture and Society [3 Volumes]: An Encyclopedia of Culture and Society: ABC," *CLIO*, 2015.

²⁷ Takyiwaa Manuh and Esi Sutherland-Addy, *Africa in Contemporary Perspective: A Textbook for Undergraduate Students* (Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2014).

²⁸ Mookgo Solomon Kgatle and Thinandavha Derrick Mashau, "A Decolonial Perspective on the Practice of Unveiling Tombstones in Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in South Africa," *Religions* 14, no. 3 (2023): 288.

²⁹ Kgatle and Mashau, "A Decolonial Perspective on the Practice of Unveiling Tombstones in Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in South Africa."

³⁰ A. Anderson and E. Tang, *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies Series (Regnum Books International, 2005), <https://books.google.com.gh/books?id=LDZgKELq7AoC>.

adaptable: the vibrancy, enthusiasm, spontaneity, and spirituality for which Pentecostals are so well known and their willingness to address the problems of sickness, poverty, unemployment, loneliness, evil spirits, and sorcery has directly contributed to this growth.”³¹ Indigenous Pentecostalism is acceptable among Africans because Christian believers are not condemned for embracing their cultural practices. On the contrary, some of the cultural practices are embraced by the indigenous Pentecostal churches in Africa. Therefore, Pentecostalism owes its success in Africa to its adaptation to cultural and traditional practices some of which are already embraced in African Traditional religions.

Oral Nature of Indigenous Pentecostal Liturgy

The indigenous Pentecostal liturgy is very oral in nature which makes it very alive, and participatory as opposed to the reserved Western liturgy. This kind of liturgy is not written down or even read during the spiritual service but rather memorized which makes it very lively.³² Although some indigenous Pentecostal churches might have a certain program that is followed in a Pentecostal service they are not controlled by the program. In the Pentecostal service, the Holy Spirit is the one that takes over the service, their liturgy is lively. At the same time, this is the liturgy that connects with the people in an African context. The orality of the indigenous Pentecostal liturgy is found in its music particularly songs sung during praise and worship.³³ Most indigenous Pentecostal churches in Africa would have a team of musicians, instrumentalists, and song leaders who are responsible for leading the Pentecostal liturgy during a church service. Kallinen explains that “In practice 'africanization' has entailed such things as incorporating drumming and dancing into the church liturgy as well as giving Christian meanings to certain traditional concepts and symbols.”³⁴ The Pentecostal liturgy is done with loud music which also attracts so many young people in Africa, hence the growth of the Pentecostal movement in the continent.

The orality of the indigenous Pentecostal liturgy is found in the prayer sessions. The Pentecostal movement in Africa is very strong on prayer which also includes the prayer of healing and deliverance. Pentecostal believers in Africa are known for prayers of war, powerful prayer, midnight prayer, prayer of breakthrough, deliverance prayer, prayer against witchcraft, and so forth.³⁵ In these prayer sessions, the believers gather to pray together which is not very much common in Western liturgy. These prayers are made in loud voices as opposed to the silent prayers in some Western missionary churches. The prayers are made consistently with the needs of the congregants, hence they also attract numbers during the prayer meetings. Therefore, prayer in these churches is not done to push up time or to observe a church ritual but to bring change in the lives of the congregants. Therefore, most indigenous Pentecostal churches are grounded and founded on prayer and prayer meetings.

The orality of the indigenous Pentecostal liturgy is seen during the sermon presentation. While the Western missionary churches would present a very formal sermon, the Pentecostal sermon in Africa is full of life. The author has pointed out elsewhere that “when some African Pentecostal pastors preach, they do not present a formal sermon that is full of theological expositions but present a kind of message that speaks to African problems. Hence, when preaching, most African Pentecostal preachers present a liberating gospel that can deliver people from poverty, sickness, and various challenges.”³⁶ The preacher is normally very energetic and moves around the church during the sermon. These congregants also participate during the sermon by responding with “hallelujah”, “amen”, “preach it” and so on. This causes an interaction between the preacher and the audience which makes the sermon time very participatory. This does not normally happen in Western missionary churches as sermons are done as part of the liturgical observance.

³¹ Anderson and Tang, *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*.

³² Walter J Hollenweger, “The Social and Ecumenical Significance of Pentecostal Liturgy,” *Studia Liturgica* 8, no. 4 (1971): 207–15.

³³ Mark J Cartledge and A J Swoboda, *Scripting Pentecost: A Study of Pentecostals, Worship and Liturgy* (Routledge, 2016).

³⁴ Timo Kallinen, *Divine Rulers in a Secular State* (Finnish Literature Society/SKS, 2016), 119.

³⁵ J Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, “‘Christ Is the Answer’: What Is the Question?’ A Ghana Airways Prayer Vigil and Its Implications for Religion, Evil and Public Space,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 35, no. 1 (2005): 93–117; Rijk A Van Dijk, “From Camp to Encompassment: Discourses of Transsubjectivity in the Ghanaian Pentecostal Diaspora,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 27, no. Fasc. 2 (1997): 135–59; Opoku Onyinah, “Deliverance as a Way of Confronting Witchcraft in Modern Africa: Ghana as a Case History,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 5, no. 1 (2002): 107–34.

³⁶ Mookgo Solomon Kgatle, “Spirituality of Liberation in African Pentecostal Worship and Its Implications for Black Theology,” *Black Theology* 19, no. 2 (2021): 168–80.

Indigenisation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

The gospel of Jesus Christ has been indigenised to make it relevant in an African context among many indigenous Pentecostal churches in Africa.³⁷ In some contexts, the gospel is also presented in a language that the people can understand or use an interpreter if it is preached in English. The Pentecostal pastors in these churches do not change the gospel but make it relevant to the audience in an African context. At times Westerners confuse the indigenisation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as changing its message.³⁸ The indigenous Pentecostal churches for example should not be confused with those who are calling for a black Jesus or an African Jesus. However, they should be understood as a movement that exists for the presentation of the same Jesus of Nazareth in an African context. The Indigenous gospel ministers do not necessarily change the message but package it in such a way that it is acceptable to an African audience. As discussed previously, they do this by incorporating cultural practices in the presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the reason many Africans have found resonance with the Pentecostal movement. It is also the same reason the movement is spread to different parts of the world.

The preaching of the gospel in Africa is presented in such a way that it ministers to the needs of the Africans.³⁹ It is for this reason that the gospel of Jesus among indigenous Pentecostals deals with challenges of witchcraft, sorcery, misfortune, spells, and bad luck.⁴⁰ Pentecostal pastors in Africa perceive the gospel as a powerful tool in their hands to change or deal with any challenge.⁴¹ It is within these churches that even financial challenges would be addressed through the gospel. Indigenous Pentecostal churches would even address the problems with visa applications or any other migration issues through the gospel. Hence, the importance of prayer in indigenous Pentecostal churches is for the same reasons for dealing with various challenges in Africa. This explains why Pentecostal pastors and prophets have become so popular in Africa as the believers and followers are seeking prayers for their challenges. It is for the same reason that the indigenous Pentecostal churches are popular in Africa as they minister to the needs of Africans. They have found a way to present that gospel in such a way that it is not dismissive of the African traditional and cultural worldview.

The preachers in Africa interpret the Bible to meet the needs and the challenges facing the African believer.⁴² In fact, they perceive the Bible as an authoritative book that can be used to confront the challenges that people are facing in their lives. In addition, the indigenous Pentecostal churches emphasise the importance of the prayer of healing and deliverance.⁴³ This kind of ministry is dedicated to the presentation of the gospel in a way that solves African challenges. The ministry of deliverance makes it possible for the indigenisation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ is made relevant to various African contexts through this kind of ministry. The Indigenous Pentecostal pastors do not only preach but also ensure that they pray for the people of God in their different needs.⁴⁴ This is for the same reason that people flock to these churches to get help in their predicaments. In this way, the gospel is not just presented from a theoretical point of view as it happens in the Western missional churches. But it is presented in a practical way that helps the people in Africa.

The Indigenous Force of Pentecostalism: A Decolonial Tool

The indigenous force of Pentecostalism makes it relevant for the decolonization of the Western expressions of the Christian tradition. The indigenous Pentecostal churches help to decolonise the Western expressions of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is because the indigenous Pentecostal church ministers the gospel of liberation. They do not only recycle the stories of the bible but ministers them in a way that liberates the people. The indigenous Pentecostal churches are helping African Christians to rethink the gospel of Jesus Christ as a Western

³⁷ Allan Anderson, "Challenges and Prospects for Research into African Initiated Churches in Southern Africa," *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 23, no. 3 (1995): 283–94.

³⁸ Allan Heaton Anderson, "Contextualization in Pentecostalism: A Multicultural Perspective," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 41, no. 1 (2017): 29–40.

³⁹ Mookgo Solomon Kgatle, "New Paradigms of Pneumatological Ecclesiology Brought about by New Prophetic Churches within South African Pentecostalism," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 41, no. 1 (2020): 1–6.

⁴⁰ Kudzai Biri and Molly Manyonganise, "'Back to Sender': Re-Visiting the Belief in Witchcraft in Post-Colonial Zimbabwean Pentecostalism," *Religions* 13, no. 1 (2022): 49.

⁴¹ Olufunke Adeboye, "'A Starving Man Cannot Shout Halleluyah': African Pentecostal Churches and the Challenge of Promoting Sustainable Development," in *African Initiated Christianity and the Decolonisation of Development* (Routledge, 2020), 115–35.

⁴² Thabang Mofokeng, and Mookgo S. Kgatle. "Towards a decolonial hermeneutic of experience in African Pentecostal Christianity: A South African perspective." *HTS: Theological Studies* 75, no. 4 (2019): 1-9.

⁴³ Asamoah-Gyadu, "'Christ Is the Answer': What Is the Question?" A Ghana Airways Prayer Vigil and Its Implications for Religion, Evil and Public Space."

⁴⁴ Kgatle, "New Paradigms of Pneumatological Ecclesiology Brought about by New Prophetic Churches within South African Pentecostalism," 3.

gospel. They help in the realisation that the gospel is not a Western gospel in an exclusive manner but is also the gospel relevant in Africa. African Christians need to come to a level where they ask themselves the same question that Lamin Sanneh asked, Whose religion is Christianity? Because Christianity cannot be owned by the Western culture alone, its mandates and purpose extend beyond one single culture. Hence, the importance of the indigenous Pentecostal churches as they help their congregants to perceive Christianity through African lenses. Pentecostalism is a movement that has found expression in local cultures where it is found not just in Africa.

The indigenous Pentecostal churches help their members to unthink the West. It means that the gospel is not only expressed in Western paradigms but also in the African paradigm. Members unthink the West not only in terms of the indigenous Pentecostal practices but also in terms of knowledge production. This means that the indigenous Pentecostal churches help to rewrite the history of the Pentecostal movement by telling an African story. These churches help to produce knowledge by considering the important aspects of the indigenous Pentecostal churches. The indigenous Pentecostal churches are relevant for the Decolonisation project because of the contextualization of the message of the gospel. The indigenised and contextualised gospel in Africa means that Africans are given an opportunity to drink from their own wells. This means that within these churches the gospel is preached to Africans by Africans. Many of the indigenous Pentecostal churches were started by African Pentecostal pastors and they continue to lead them successfully without supervision from the western missionary churches. This means that when Africans decide to take leadership, they are able to thrive without the help of any Western missionaries. This is the importance of the contextualisation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as it demonstrates the ability and capabilities of the African leaders.

CONCLUSION

This article has looked at indigenous Pentecostalism and its relevance for the decolonisation of the Western expressions of the Christian tradition in an African context. This was done using the indigenous knowledge system as a theoretical framework for unthinking the West. The indigenous Pentecostal movement was discussed with its links with the early indigenous forces in Africa. This article highlighted the differences between the Western forms of liturgy and the indigenous Pentecostal liturgy expressed in song, prayer, and sermons. This is one of the important factors drawing many Africans from Western missional churches to Pentecostal churches. In addition, the article pointed out the ability of the Pentecostal gospel ministers to make the gospel of Jesus Christ a relevant one in the African context. The aim was to demonstrate that the indigenous force of Pentecostalism is relevant to the decolonization of the Western expressions of Christianity. This makes the Pentecostal movement a relevant one in the framework of decolonization of the knowledge systems in an African context.

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