

?You have received the Spirit of Power?? (2 TIM.1:7)

Re-viewing the Prosperity Message in the light of a Theology of Empowerment

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INTRODUCTION

The theme of this conference was a pleasant surprise to me. From my experience in Nigeria, ?born-again? Christians, as members of the Pentecostal-Charismatic groups are often called, are regarded as standing for moral standards higher than those prevalent in the society. Even the choice of a regenerative metaphor ? born again ? is indicative of the centrality of the theme of personal and social rebirth in their vision and discourse. This vision (re)commends new identity and new practice whose legitimacy and condition of possibility is the ?Power from on high.?[1] However, the focus is more on personal rebirth to the neglect of social rebirth. In the light of this, I understand this conference as interested in examining the reasons for the one-sided focus on personal morality and the near exclusion of social concerns understood in terms of commitment to the realization of a life-enhancing socio-economic and political and cultural field of action for all. I have to add immediately that the same can be said of most mainline Catholic and Protestant spiritualities. However, I am of the opinion that the Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality resonates with the African contemporary life-world and that it has resources to reflect on and to more directly engage in social transformation. But, before this aspect of the spirituality can be liberated, some of its emphases, and here I focus on the emergent emphases due to its reception into the African context, have to be reflected upon. That is what I want to do here with the help of the metaphor of empowerment.

This paper has two main parts. The first part is diagnostic. Here I examine the Prosperity message. The aim is to find out why, despite its conviction that it is God?s will that, at least, believers should enjoy abundance of life, health, wealth, material comfort here on earth, this message does not see and confront the socio-economic and political mechanisms that thwart God?s plan of wholeness for humanity. The second part addresses the results from the first part in the light of a theology of empowerment. This theology calls attention to the fact that as children of God, we have received the Spirit from on High, a Spirit of power that strengthens and enables us contribute to the advent of God?s Kingdom here on earth. This is a theology that draws from the Trinity and has both Pneumatological and Christological concentration. God associates humanity in God?s work of creation and redemption. The incarnation is the high and unique point of this divine-human synergism. Through the Holy Spirit, God is still active

in history, ?trans-substantiating?[2] individuals and communities into the Body of Christ and the Bread of Life to be broken and shared for the life of the world. The final part shows that empowerment and the vision behind it are applicable beyond the African context.

Let me characterise the voice speaking by indicating the tradition within which I stand and the commitments that shape my reflection. I am an African (Nigerian), a Catholic of the Roman rite and a Systematic Theologian interested in Pentecostalism, liberation and inculturation issues from the African context. I hope that these would help understand some of my emphasis, my mode of theological reasoning and the choice of my dialogue partners.

Finally, let me remark that I use the hyphenated term ?*Pentecostal-Charismatic* spirituality to embrace the different waves in Pentecostalism. Also, I speak about ?Pentecostal-Charismatic *spirituality*? in order to indicate the family resemblance on the level of spirituality between the Pentecostal churches and the Charismatic groups within the main-line churches. In other words, my focus is not on distinct ecclesial groups as much as on the commonality of emphases, vision and spirituality. May it also be noted that these groups differ considerably from one another.[3] Because of the transnational character of the Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality[4] and the heterogeneity of Africa, questions can be raised about the propriety of speaking about *African* Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality. I do not intend to give the impression that African Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality is monolithic. There is however family resemblance between them. I recognize the transnational character or more accurately, its American connection.[5] But while this spirituality is seemingly peripheral in American life, it offers the dominant conceptual framework in Africa. Finally, without having to discuss the peculiarities of the groups, I focus on the Prosperity Message which offers the key to understanding many of the tendencies and emphases both in the Churches and in the society at large.

2.0 THE PROSPERITY MESSAGE[6]

There is increasing concern and alarm with regard to the attraction and spread of the Prosperity Message in Africa. It is attacked from many perspectives. Those interested in the economic aspect, explain the spread as a co-efficient of the socio-economic and political insecurity in Africa. For the pet psychologists, the Christian groups that emphasize prosperity provide schemes of compensation and adjustive mechanism to people whose material condition of existence is deplorable. For those concerned with the global flow of goods and ideas, the Prosperity Message and the whole Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality is a transnational phenomenon that receives it impetus from the Religious Right in America.[7] I will argue, on the one hand, that although the Prosperity Message[8] was articulated in America, it intersects with the holistic vision of salvation in the primal religions[9] of Africa. Well being is conceived of as touching both life here and the here-after. On the other hand, this Prosperity Message induces and at the same time re-inforces a strand in the primal religious tradition of Africa that discounts human agency in the transformation of society. Finally, I argue that the Pentecostal-charismatic spirituality has resources to overcome this one-sidedness. This is the point of departure for the articulation of a theology of empowerment.

2.1 The Prosperity Message and the African Primal World-view

There have been many studies of the Prosperity Message and I do not intend to go into them in any detail. Suffice it to mention that the central tenet of this emphasis in Christianity is that God has met all the needs of human beings in the suffering and death of Jesus. Every Christian should therefore share in Jesus victory over sin, death, sickness and poverty. Thus, it is the will of God for people to prosper or succeed in every area of life. Prosperity here includes health, wealth, wholeness. Some elements are strikingly new. First is the focus on the resurrection and not on the cross; on the fruits of the suffering and death of Jesus rather than on Jesus? call for all to take up their cross and follow him. Second is that material poverty is included in what Jesus redeemed humanity from. This means that life of prosperity and comfort is the vocation and destiny of Christians thanks to the Jesus event. This life of blessedness starts here on earth and reaches consummation in the afterlife. What is needed to activate the divine blessing is faith. This has to be combined with the religious practice of tithing which, according to a particular interpretation of Malachi 3:10-12, is what is needed so that God opens the floodgates of heaven and rains down blessings. The blessings mentioned in the pericope of Malachi include protection against pestilence and increase in the fruitfulness of the land and the vine. This is translated into contemporary values such as cars, fat bank account, employment, fertility, visa to emigrate,[10] and protection from witchcraft.

Anthonia Essien describes the Prosperity Message as counterfeit or consumer religion. By consumer religion she means a religion shaped by the priorities and demands of the economic order. She also accuses it of preaching a brand of Christianity that is forgetful of the Cross and of the prophetic vocation of Christianity and Christians.[11] A more theological and at the same time sympathetic assessment is made by Allan Anderson. The Prosperity Message is accused of not taking seriously the sovereignty of God and gravitating dangerously towards humanism - that is a religion centered on human beings. God is there for the sake of the human needs and faith is a lever for manipulating God into showering blessings on human beings. Thus faith and *ipso facto* God, have no intrinsic value in themselves.[12]

The criticism above, in my view, needs to be nuanced. I share Anderson?s discomfort with regard to the tendency to make God a sort of cosmic bell-hop or errand-boy who responds to all human wishes at the instance of a ?trans-terrestrial telephone call? - that is a prayer of faith. But I would defend the view that human well being lies close to the heart of God.[13] This is what creation as an outflow of God?s goodness and love means. However, God?s ways are not our ways and God?s thoughts are not our thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8) Thus, what I hear Anderson saying is that the Prosperity Message does not respect the otherness of God. It does not accept

the logic of paradox, for example that life comes through death, that unless a grain of wheat dies it remains a single grain. It does not want to accept the mystery of evil - that suffering is in the world in spite of God's love for all. It prefers to simplify the vision by focusing on Jesus' death as substitutionary, once-and-for-all cancelling out and dissolving the dialectic between life and death, love and suffering. This is the point at stake, and not God's sovereignty. In Nigeria, the Prosperity Message one-sidedly emphasises God's sovereignty and leaves out human agency. This explains the popularity of the quotation from Zechariah 4:6 - 'not by power nor might but by my Spirit says the Lord.' This is cited in support of an attitude of resigned waiting for the manifestation of the spirit and power of God. I will focus on this in greater detail.

A very interesting aspect of Anderson's reflection is his defence of the Prosperity Message. He goes on the offensive by insisting that it is those who hold an otherworldly, dualistic view of salvation who are shaken by the Prosperity Message. The Bible, he continues, especially the First Testament, emphasises the unity of the human being. It presents salvation as wholeness of human life, which begins here on earth and reaches consummation in the hereafter. Finally, he notes that African cosmology is wholistic. The missionary endeavour however offered a type of Christianity that is one-sidedly otherworldly. The upsurge in Christian groups that emphasis prosperity and I would include those who emphasise healing are indicative of the resilience of this cosmological vision. In other words, explanation of the spread of the Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality and the attraction of the Prosperity Message is not unconnected with African primal spirituality. Purely sociological or socio-economic perspectives are not sufficient. The challenge then is to make the Christian message relevant to the whole of life.^[14]

2.1.1 Africa's Wholistic Worldview

By Africa's wholistic worldview is meant the expectation that the experience of wholeness, that is, long healthy life, wealth, fertility, success etc., is legitimate and that religion should contribute to its provision. The primal belief among the Igbo of the Southeastern Nigeria is even more radical. One's status in the spirit world depends on what status one had achieved in this life. A similar logic can be seen in the burial rites in other cultures in which people are buried with their precious possessions or even with slaves. They would use these objects of distinction and the slaves would continue to serve them in the spirit world. The Igbo has been misunderstood as being irreverent to their gods and deities. This misunderstanding arises because the community reserves the right to abandon, starve or replace its deity if s/he fails in his or her duty of protecting the community or fulfilling other needs for which s/he was being revered in the community. The implication is that the deities have an obligation to the community. This obligation is understood in terms of providing the conditions for people to achieve well being in their lives. Thus religion is not just about attaining fullness of life in the 'other world.' Life on earth is supposed to be a foretaste of that fullness of life and a sign of divine favour.

Other cultures with a longer history of contact with Christianity could have had such a cosmological framework before the otherworldly focus of a strain of Christian tradition took over.^[15] At least, that is the case with Jewish culture as recorded in the First Testament. It has to be admitted that the root of this otherworldly focus is in the strain of apocalypticism that developed during the post-exilic period^[16] and thus provided the framework for the Second Testament.^[17] In the First Testament, this world and the otherworld are delicately co-ordinated to one another and some would even question whether these questions are raised in the First Testament. Yahweh is the God who saved Israel from the house of bondage, who fought their battles and ensured their victory as long as they have not disobeyed. This is the crux of Jewish messianism. One hears echoes of this in the question of the apostles whether it was time to restore the kingdom to Israel. (Acts 1:6) However, the Christian tradition seems to have been influenced more by Jesus' saying that 'My Kingdom is not of this world.' (John 18:36) The salvation of soul became the chief emphasis and human promotion or 'salvation of the body' became only a by-product or an area to be cultivated to the extent that it aids the salvation of souls. It is this scheme of co-ordination between the two that the Prosperity Message re-articulates. It retrieves elements of the Christian tradition that centre on the vision that Jesus has come that people may have life and have it in all its fullness. (NEB John 10:10) Within the context of an integral anthropology, which sees the human being as not only spiritual, but also corporeal, gendered, social and political, the implication of 'life in fullness' for all the other dimensions of human life became evident. This is the shift that the Prosperity Message embodies. It is therefore no wonder that the Prosperity Message is attractive and widespread in Africa. The wholistic vision of the primal worldview as well as the crisis situation on the continent might have played significant roles in its popularity. In the account of the popularity of the Prosperity Message and the phenomenal spread of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality in general, one must not forget the role of the print and electronic media.^[18] This received support from the cultural politics of globalisation in which people are pressured into imbibing and identifying with the dominant culture and all institutions that promised access to this culture.

2.1.2 Africa's Alleged 'Anthropology of Impotence' and the Focus on Sin

Having seen the possible reasons for the attraction to Africans of the Prosperity Message, let me focus briefly on the synthesis achieved. My view is that the crisis-ridden African context posed in strong terms the problem of suffering and theodicy to the Prosperity Message. Why is it that people, in spite of their faith, still do not prosper? The answer is that there is something, which blocks the flow of God's blessing. The block needs to be removed. This block cannot be social nor structural because of what Herman Beseah Browne calls the 'anthropology of impotence.' It is spiritual, that is, supra-human and thus requires spiritual solution. This explains the centrality in African Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality of demonology and the stress on deliverance, on exorcism, on healing.

Stephen Njoku's theology of curses and release from curses, and healing the Family tree are examples of a local appropriation of the Prosperity Message coloured by an emphasis on deliverance. As expected, due to the crisis situation on the continent, he

struggles to answer the theodicy question in the Prosperity Message. He foregrounds the Prosperity Message in a creation theology. For him, the creation of human beings on the sixth day after all other things have been created, is of great significance. ?A day after his creation, when he would have started work, Adam joined God in his rest. He looked around him and saw not work to be done, but work already done, good things already put under his feet. And so *God created man not to work, but to enjoy and rest with him*. It means that in every way we are abundantly provided for and abundantly blessed.?[19] (my emphasis). It means that human beings are created to rest with God. However, the situation in Africa does not bear out this life of abundance. He therefore had to theorise that there must be something holding back this primal blessing. In his answer, he draws from and exaggerates some strands of the response to the question of suffering and evil in primal African religions.[20]

Every culture is faced with the task of clarifying why people suffer and why some people suffer more than others. In Africa, as in other cultures, gods, deities, spirits and destiny are invoked in the explanation. Among the Igbo of the Southeastern Nigeria, for example, there is a paradoxical recognition that destiny can and cannot be changed. This is a way of saying that human beings are architects of their destiny but not always they way they want it. There are constraints.[21] These constraints are not only bio-genetic and social. They are also spiritual. The spiritual factor is the interference of evil forces either through witchcraft or those activated by one?s forebears who incur curses on themselves and their descendants. These notwithstanding, hard work is rewarded and recognised as the way to success.[22] What has happened in Njoku?s articulation is that an anti-work ethic[23] is enthroned and the crisis on the continent is explained in terms of the curses that block the flow of God?s blessing to Africa. The religious imagination at work can be seen in this way: God?s blessing is presented as ?living water? (Jn.4:10) flowing through the network of human and ancestral relationships. The flow can be blocked through the activities of one of the ancestral conduit pipes. The poverty, sickness, the AIDS pandemic in Africa, are results of a block in the conduit pipe of God?s blessing. To open up the clogged pipe, one needs to call God, the plumber per excellence, through the hotline of prayer to send ?Holy Ghost Fire? and burn up the offending evil spirits or the impersonal force of the curse and open up the channel again.

Herman Beseah Browne characterises the anthropology that underlies Njoku?s and similar reflections as an ?anthropology of impotence.?[24] This means that the human being is seen as helpless pun of fortune and the gods. He claims that this an authentic African view of human beings. Browne formulates his rather sweeping view in the context of his polemic against the possibility of an *African liberation theology*. ?An African theology that is also a liberation theology [is] a theoretical impossibility.? (xiii) According to him, this is because human agency is central in liberation theology but in African Traditional Theology (ATT),[25] human beings are puppets of the gods. ?*Action is the preserve of divinity,*? (82) ?*human action is, in reality, the empirical result of divine agency?* (91) and ?*historical events are the effects, having their source of explanation in the spiritual realm, despite human agency and intentions.*? (84) (my emphasis) In conclusion, Browne claims that the world is seen as ?a stage whereupon we play our roles - perfectly choreographed by the Creator - exiting to a better place.? (85)

Browne however runs into trouble. If human life has been scripted and choreographed by God, what is the place of human freedom and how is the problem of evil to be made intelligible? He never bothered to raise the question of freedom, probably, because it is a legacy of modernity and the Enlightenment ? the unpardonable sins of liberation theology. He tackles the question of evil, which is very existential in Africa. According to him, evil befalls people when the ancestors and the gods remove their protective shield. This happens if their protégée infringes on the moral laws. This is what Browne calls Africa?s ?victim as culprit thesis.? (59) The conclusion he draws from this thesis is that ?the evils we suffer are never really caused by human agency, but by supraempirical agency,? and ?we suffer the evil we suffer because of the evil we do.? (62) In conclusion, the right response to one?s suffering is self-examination and purification. Concretely, this means that the millions of jobless young Nigerians, for example, are suffering because of the evil they committed. In other words, the socio-political system is given a clean bill of health. Each individual is held responsible for his or her suffering. The ancestors are added as epicycles to save the theory.

Browne?s analysis converges with the vision presented by Njoku.[26] The later speaks of curses as blocks to the reception of divine blessing, while the former makes the same point through his ?victim as culprit thesis.? People suffer because they themselves or those of their immediate family had sinned. There is much to criticise in this cryto-social analysis conducted with skewed spiritual-moral lens. First, it has no inkling of the structural dimension of suffering ? how people are deformed or paralysed because they are born in societies where the facilities for the prevention of some problems are lacking. This may be because of the inefficiency of those responsible for the provision of such facilities. Second, the view of society underlying this type of analysis is inadequate. Society is seen as nothing more than a conglomeration of individuals and families. No thought is given to the political, economic and social relationships that arise from and transcend the individuals that constitute it. Wars, for example, have been fought in the name of nation states. These states have a reality and are moral personalities. They transcend the individuals that make them up. Third, the Njoku-Browne analysis lacks any sensitivity to history and to the global dimension of contemporary life. A decision in Brussels or policy change of any of the powerful financial institutions or regional trading blocks can have life and death significance for people in other parts of the world. One wonders how such events can be fitted into Browne?s ?victim as culprit thesis? or into Njoku?s framework of ancestral curse.

Browne?s reflection is a polemic against the anthropocentricity of enlightenment thinking. Liberation theology served only as a tool for this project. And his strategy was to reconstruct an African ethno-theology in order to show that enlightenment thinking is not African. This is, of course, stating the obvious.[27] The problem is that he allowed in a very uncritical way, the polemic of his study

to provide the interpretive key to African culture. Since enlightenment thinking and by the same token liberation theology emphasise human agency, African ethno-theology must do the opposite ? emphasise divine agency. This is the bare bone of his method, which is deductive and ahistorical. The consequence is the over-systematisation of elements of the worldview. He thus misses the nuances and complexities of the African cultural response to their environment. This response is ongoing and historical. One would therefore expect a reflection concerned with articulating a framework for cultural and societal transformation that would be doubly faithful to the best in Africa culture and to the best in the globalized modernity in view of addressing the contemporary problems of Africa. He did not do this.

The same problem of contextual insensitivity can be levelled against Stephen Njoku. He appropriated categories articulated in non-African context without critiquing these. In the context of North America, for example, the connection between the Prosperity Message and the school of Positive Thinking of Norman Vincent Peale has been noted.[28] This means that the affirmation, ?God wills the prosperity of those who believe? served as a psychological boon to ginger people to think positively and to work hard. This Message emerged during the boom years in the United States when opportunities for prosperity abounded. In Africa, however, the Prosperity Message is received in a context of crisis. With joblessness, poor sanitary condition, poverty, and a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness it meant that all depends on God, ?God will make a way where there seems to be no way.? The enormity of the problem led to an analysis exclusively in terms of curses and evil spirits. In this, he follows mentors like Derek Prince and De Grandis. It is interesting that in the context of Western Europe and North America, curses and evil spirits are used to explain personal and individual problems. Recourse is made to these when science and technology, the height of human exercise of agency have been tried. The Federal Reserve and the Chairpersons of the Central Banks are expected to take aggressive moves in cutting interest rates in order to arrest economic slow down and possible recession. The economic crisis and the failure of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), for example, is seen by Stephen Njoku as evidence that Nigeria is under a curse. The curse is not from the corruption and ineptitude of the leaders or from negative consequences of the global economic system or the curse of the SAP itself, but from the effect of what he calls ?idolatry.? The primal religions of Africa are so described. The way to break the chain of curses and effect socio-economic turn-around is through prayers.[29] Thus from being linked to the school of Positive Thinking in the American context, the Prosperity Message undersigns an attitude of resignation.

Let me sum up the discussion so far. The Prosperity Message resonates with the wholistic worldview that survives in Africa. This is the probable reason for its spread. However, in the American context, the message has the effect of motivating action borne out of trust in God?s promise, in Africa it has the contrary effect of counselling reliance, surrender and waiting on God to pour out blessings of wealth, health, success. This resembles what anthropologists call cargo cult mentality. It is this mentality and what is called Afro-pessimism[30] that I consider the main determinants of the *Zeitgeist* to which African theology must respond. This is what I do below.

3.0 Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality and the theology of Empowerment

The presence and action of the Holy Spirit is central to the Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality. There is unanimous agreement that the Holy Spirit has been marginalised in western theology.[31] This neglect has had some consequences in the history of Christianity.[32] How has the neglect and its correction played themselves out in Africa? I have two intuitions, which I would only mention in passing. First, I want to suggest that the African Independent Churches can be seen as children of this neglect.[33] Admittedly, this abstracts from the historical events and the personalities behind the birth of these Churches. This abstraction however serves the purpose of focusing attention on the dynamics of the culture contact. The other suggestion is that the rediscovery of pneumatology or the strong influence of the Pentecostal-charismatic spirituality came at a point of deep crisis in Africa?s history. This gave rise to a peculiar reception of this spirituality and the result is a devaluation of human agency. This devaluation of human agency is a reflection of a widespread cultural factor. However, instead of claiming that an ?anthropology of impotence? expresses the primal African cultures as Beseah Browne does, I am of the view that this impotence is historical. It is the result of the disillusionment and despair induced by the viciousness of the problems and the negative comparison that media images of better life elsewhere incite. The crisis situation in Africa is overwhelming and becoming complicated by the day.[34] African Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality latches on to this situation and in turn reinforces it. However the Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality offers the resources for dealing with this despair and undertaking the **global** structural adjustment programme necessary for the continual search for greater harmony and prosperity for all. In this sense, while empowerment is borne out of reflection on the African context, it is also relevant to other contexts.

3.1 Empowerment ? A Conceptual Analysis

Empowerment is an inflexion of the root concept ?power.? Christian tradition has been ambivalent towards the concept of power. This ranges from outright condemnation to the identification of the Holy Spirit as the power of God. From the negative point of view, *libido dominandi* - usually translated as lust for power - is one of the three cardinal sins noted by St. Augustine.[35] In contemporary times, John Milbank continues this blanket stigmatisation of power.[36] Moreover, discourse on power raises eye-brows because it focuses attention on the structure of relationships with the aim of ferreting out the often concealed imbalances and their ideological justification. Against this background, empowerment calls for change and for transformation of the structure of relationship and their ideological underpinnings. But this comes about as consequence of the transformation of human beings. These would then commit themselves to the transformation and renewal of the structures of society.

Power is an essentially contested concept?^[37] because it has many levels of meaning. Power often means the capacity to dominate, to control and make others act in one way rather than another in order to fulfil the wishes of the one who has the power. In this sense, power comes near to a zero-sum game. Someone gains power at the expense of someone else. From this vision, empowerment is not possible. Or rather, empowerment would only mean to delegate, to authorise. At the root of this vision of power is the model of power as resource or social capital, which an individual can convert or cash in order to achieve what s/he wants.

Power can also be seen as a capacity or energy. The root metaphor is not social. Electricity is called power because it has a capacity to bring about some reality. In like manner, every human being can be said to have power - power of speech, power of hearing. This capacity can be heightened. This heightening, this increase of the transformative capacity captures what is meant by empowerment. Thus empowerment is built from a notion of power as transformative capacity.^[38] This heightening can be the result of a change in consciousness through and in a community. Theology contributes to this process in terms of the imaginative vision it offers of God's relationship with humanity and with creation.

This notion of power and empowerment has social implication. To explicate this leads to the debate in sociology between structural and structuration theorists. I can only present a simplified version of the issues at stake. The structuralists privilege the society as constituting human subjectivity. The human being is seen as very malleable and thus shaped by the society. They emphasise that society changes through the interaction of many forces among which human agency is only one. The structuration theorists use a more dialectical framework to relate the human being and the society. They acknowledge that there are deep structures of society that constrain and channel human action and result in quasi-mechanical reproduction of societal patterns. Without denying the difficulties of social change, they admit that society is constituted and re-constituted through human agency even if a majority of those involved in this process are not aware of the larger picture or social pattern that their action helps to maintain or to disrupt. I follow the later theorists because it seems truer to history. The emergence of the free market economy, for example, is the consequence of some policy decisions taken at historical points in time during the Thatcher/Reagan era. It is not the inevitable by-product of technological development.^[39]

The structuration framework admits the theoretical possibility of modifying, if not overthrowing the deep structures of the society, such as the global capitalism in its free market form. It is possible to change this, but the stakes are high. Those who are advantaged by it would resist it while those who demand for its change are not in a position to enforce their desire. Another example is the deep structure of corruption in many developing nations. It is theoretically possible to change this by strengthening the structures of society. But, the rhizomatic network of clients and patrons, domestic and foreign, who emerged in the first place because of the weakness of the socio-political structure, have vested interests which they would not give up without a fight. Moreover, corruption has become, as it were, a way of life that it is hard for some people brought up in such circumstances to rid themselves of the opportunistic attitude to life that conduces to corrupt practices. Opposing corruption may be really dangerous to life and limb and result in lost of one's due without any possibility of redress. Other issues that show the difficulty of social transformation are the environment and the spiral of violence in some societies. Everybody agrees that climatic change is caused by human activity and that there is need for urgent action. But the question is who shoulders the cost? What should have priority? business? environment? winning the next election? having the ease of travelling in one's car instead of public transport where these are operating even if badly? About violence, it is my guess that no community loves violence and conflict. But how can memories be healed, hurts forgiven and structures which marginalize people be reformed? There are numerous other examples.

Put simply, while it is accepted that human beings through the exercise of agency make and remake their societies, societal structures and dynamics seem to take a life of their own and oppose all effort to change them. To put it better, the plurality and divergence of interests, the principle of double effect that seems to attend to some courses of action, show that society is not like wet clay that could be easily moulded by a potter. Moreover even those struggling for transformation according to a wholesome vision are children of their societies and are limited in the breadth of their imagination, their capacity to empathise etc. Of late, the talk is about donor weariness.

These difficulties notwithstanding, or rather because of them, the question arises as regards how theology would articulate a vision of faith that would enable all, especially Christians to be salt of the earth. How is the face of the earth to be renewed so that all may have, at least, a foretaste of full in abundance? Where does one get the resources to overcome the pessimism and the desire to seek one's own comfort and well being first?

3.2 Pentecost and the Theology of Empowerment

The popular understanding among the Pentecostal-Charismatics in Nigeria of the text of Zachariah 4:6 illustrates what a theology of empowerment is not. In this text, the prophetic word is addressed to Zerubbabel, the Persian appointed governor of Judah after the exile. The verse reads: 'not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord.' (RSV) The historical context of this prophecy nor the critical questions that this pericope raise, is not attended to.^[40] What is known and valued is that God is promising that the task of rebuilding the temple entrusted to Zerubbabel would be achieved in spite of all obstacles. Significantly, it would be

achieved not by the might or power of Zerubbabel, but by the Spirit of God. This is however interpreted as to support the view that God would miraculously, that is, without any human input carry out the task. This shows once again the tendency to exalt divine agency at the expense of human beings as if God and human beings are competing and the agency of one excludes the other. It also represents a collapsing of the eschatological tension between God's engagement in human history and the definitive fulfilment of God's purpose despite all odds.

The title of Carroll Stuhlmueller's commentary on the books of Haggai and Zechariah *Rebuilding with Hope* points in the direction of empowerment theology. This title brings out the import of the verse in Zechariah. God is involved in history. Therefore the project and God's purpose, despite all odds, are sure to reach completion and fulfilment. This interpretation in terms of God's engagement and fidelity which inspires hope is distant from that which sees the verse as an assurance that God accomplishes God's purpose miraculously.[41] This excursus thus shows that at stake is a balanced theology of history and the model for understanding God's relationship with creation and with the world. Paul's admonition to Timothy points in the direction of this answer to these questions. Paul reminded Timothy that God's spirit is not a spirit of timidity but of power and love and self-control. (RSV 2 Tim. 1:7) In the New English Bible, the translation is, 'the Spirit that God gave us is no craven spirit, but one to inspire strength, love, and self-discipline.' (2 Timothy 1:7). Further, Paul encourages Timothy to take his share of suffering for the sake of the Gospel in the strength that comes from God. Against this background, Krister Stendahl's reflection on the theme of the WCC assembly in Canberra, 'Come, Holy Spirit - Renew the Whole Creation' becomes illuminating. Stendahl took as title, *Energy for Life*. [42] The Holy Spirit is the energy with which life is lived. This reminds one of the speech of St Paul at Areopagus. It is in God we live, move and have our being. This vision underlines the immanence of God while at the same time preserving the transcendence. It leaves room for God's miraculous intervention in history over an above the immanent engagement. But it refuses to erect miracles as the norm of God's relationship with creation.

The Pentecost narrative portrays the vision of a theology of empowerment. In the Gospel of John, the disciples were presented as afraid of the Jews and thus stayed behind locked doors. In the Lucan account, there was a positive injunction from Jesus that they should remain in Jerusalem till they receive the Holy Spirit. When they received the Holy Spirit, they were transformed. Peter who had denied Jesus in front of a maidservant became the fearless leader who witnessed to Jesus in front of the Jewish authorities. When they were flogged, the apostles rejoiced because they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name. (Acts 5:41). They were also able to challenge the socio-economic organisation of their society. They formed a community where people shared all they had. [43] The case of Ananias and Sapphira shows the need for continual conversion. It might be that these radical commitment were possible to the first Christian community because of the expectation of the imminent coming of the Kingdom. This only shows the difficulty that has to be overcome in finding an incentive for commitment to being salt of the earth and for renewing the face of the earth.

The story of the Pentecost and the history of the Church contribute to the articulation of a balanced theology of history. They set to rest the opposition between divine and human agency. God chooses people and communities and through them carries out God's loving purpose. This is a central message of the incarnation. Emmanuel - God is with us. God wills to be with creation, to move history not from outside but from within, and to do this in, with and through human beings. God does not want to direct history as a monarch but to be with, to inspire, strengthen, challenge and lure humanity and history on the path to fulfilment. This fulfilment would come about through the definitive act of God. It is impossible to capture the details of this synergism between God and humanity just as it is impossible to penetrate into how the two natures in Jesus relate to one another. The Christological formulations and the theories of *en-* and *an-hypostasis* [44] do not claim to explain the mystery of the incarnation. Rather, they are starting points for reflection. They mark the boundaries of orthodoxy using the Greek metaphysical categories. Jesus is truly God and truly human and was not a split personality. This shows the need for a dialectical framework in the reflection on the relationship between God and humanity or in the articulation of a theology of history. One sees this dialectics in the aphorism of St. Augustine: pray as if all depended on God and work as if all depended on you. It is this pattern of relationship between God and humanity that I capture with the metaphor of empowerment. God enables and strengthens human beings through the power of the Spirit. The definitive success is an act of God. But meanwhile human agency in collaboration with God's grace and Spirit is necessary for furthering the loving purpose of God.

The final point I want to make is to relate the theology of empowerment to the Eucharistic body of Christ. In Orthodox theology and in some patristic writings, the salvific event of Jesus is understood in terms of divinization. Jesus, through his life, death and resurrection has made us children of God through the Spirit poured out on creation. Jesus is the first among many brothers and sisters. He shows us how and what it means to be sons and daughters of God. The high-point of this is on the cross where he consummated the self-gift and self-emptying that characterised his whole life. On the previous night, Jesus had summed up his life and mission in the Eucharist. He gave his body and blood, broken and poured out for the life of the world in symbolic anticipation of his death on the cross. However where the synoptic gospels had the institution of the Eucharist, John had Jesus wash the feet of the twelve. At the end, he explains: 'If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. I have set an example: you are to do as I have done for you.' (NEB John 13,14-15). John thus interprets the Eucharist and the cross of Jesus in terms of service to one another. [45]

From the above, one can argue that the vision of the Cross of Jesus can be made the centre of the Pentecostal-Charismatic

Spirituality and in particular the Prosperity Message.^[46] This spirituality does not give in to dolorism - that is, making the cross, suffering, deprivation, poverty, and the negativities of life, into values in itself. This is already something positive. From here, I move on to present the cross not as what one has to put up with but what one actively embraces in self-giving love. The Eucharist is a celebration and an invitation to give ourselves as Jesus has given his for the life of the world. We draw strength from the experience of the Holy Spirit in community and in concert with others we are called to change the situation that gives rise to the poverty or conflict. This entails working very hard, prophetic denunciation, taking the way of calvary to forgiveness etc. It also entails the humble recognition that some negative experiences of life cannot be so transformed. In such cases, the theology of empowerment calls attention to the fact that God's spirit stands with and supports us.

4.0 Conclusion

At the beginning, I called attention to the intellectual tradition within which I stand. I claim the Prosperity Message as a re-appropriation of the balance in the primal African worldview with its wholistic view of blessedness or salvation. I also honour the culturally conditioned conceptualization and aetiologies of sickness, suffering, ill-fortune etc as the result of interference from spiritual beings. From the liberation theological tradition I critique the cargo-cult mentality and the opposition between divine and human agency as seen in some manifestations of the Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality in Africa. And from this tradition of spirituality, I appropriate an emphasis on the Holy Spirit as source of power and transformative capacity in response to what is known in literature as 'afro-pessimism' and to the prevalent interpretation of experiences in terms of evil forces.^[47] I brought all these together with the metaphor of empowerment.

In the context of the theme of this conference, my paper has two parts. The first is diagnostic. I tried to understand why the Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality focuses on individual spiritual and ethical regeneration to the detriment of social engagement. The finding is that this spirituality is held captive by the historically induced 'anthropology of impotence' which is glossed over and spiritualised as faith in the sovereign and the miracle-working God. From this point, I articulated a theology of empowerment, which takes seriously and at the same time, seeks to overcome the existential pathos of impotence and pessimism. This is the point of strength of the Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality. As Christians, a growing awareness and experience of the presence of God's Spirit, translates into greater rootedness in God and openness to God in service to others; it gives rise to a vitality of life lived out of God. >From this perspective, ethics not only grows in importance as the Conference organisers hope but the resources for a liberation ethics is provided. I dare therefore to say that while the focus of my articulation of the theology of empowerment is the African context, it resonates also with other contexts where choices and negotiations for the realization of ideals in consonance with the Gospel vision of the Kingdom of God are as real and where there is also a pathos of impotence with regard to the realization of the Christian vision of abundant life for all.

[1] Ruth Marshall presents this very well in her article, 'Power in the Name of Jesus': Social Transformation and Pentecostalism in Western Nigeria 'Revisited'? *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa*, ed. Terence Ranger & Olufemi Vaughan (London: Macmillan Press, 1993) 213-246.

[2] This is the technical term in Catholic Eucharistic theology. This term documents the influence of Greek ontology in the Christological and Trinitarian Controversies in the Great Ecumenical Councils of the Church. There has been a reaction against and a debate about the continued use of these terminologies and the place of Greek ontology in theology. Suffice it to note that I chose this term simply to indicate that the Holy Spirit touches the whole of one's life.

[3] For example, the Scripture Union founded by Pastor Kumuyi emphasises holiness and thus are in line with the holiness tradition which is the root from which Pentecostalism sprang up. For the relationship between the Pentecostals and the Holiness Groups see John Thomas Nichol, *The Pentecostals* (New Jersey: Logos, 1966) 1-17. However, the group founded by Mensa Otobil of Ghana tries to instil black pride and incorporates (post)-colonial discourse and stresses Africa's political and economic self-determination. Cf. Paul Gifford, 'Ghana's Charismatic Churches' *Journal of Religion in Africa* 24:3 (1994) 244-251, 261. From the point of view of this emphasis, the group comes close to Black Pentecostalism founded by Lovett. This was also concerned with socio-economic, political and cultural issues that affect the Black Communities in the United State. See Leonard Lovett, 'Perspectives on Black Pentecostalism,' quoted in Walter Hollenweger, *Pentecostal, Between Black and White* (Belfast: Christian Journal, 1974) 22.

[4] See Rijk A. van Dijk, 'From Camp to Encompassment: Discourses of Transsubjectivity in the Ghanaian Pentecostal Disapora,' *Journal of Religion in Africa* 27:2 (1997) 142. He writes, 'Pentecostalism is historically a transnational phenomenon, which in its modern forms is reproduced in its local diversity through a highly accelerated circulation of goods, ideas and people. The new charismatic type of Pentecostalism creates a moral and physical geography whose domain is one of transnational cultural inter-penetration and flow.'

[5] Paul Gifford stresses this American Connection. He goes as far as suggesting that the Christ for All Nation crusade organised by Reinhard Bonnke in Africa, is a curious amalgam of Christian ideas and the American way of life. Paul Gifford, 'Africa Shall be Saved,' An Appraisal of Reinhard Bonnke's Pan-African Crusade, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 17:1 (1987) 85. Although one should not over generalise, it remains true that most of the literature and the liturgy adapted in these groups take after American values and approach to life.

[6] I defer to Allan Anderson's choice of terminology and I agree with his desire not to give offense. See, Allan Anderson, 'The Prosperity Message in the Eschatology of Some New Charismatic Churches,' *Missionalia* 15:2 (1987) 72.

[7] For such a view, see Paul Gifford, 'Africa Shall be Saved,' an Appraisal of Reinhard Bonnke's Pan-African Crusade, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 17:1 (1987) 63-92.

[8] Those who helped create this message include Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Jerry Savelle, Frederick Price. Allan Anderson, 'The Prosperity Message in the Eschatology of Some New Charismatic Churches,' *op. Cit.* 74. Paul Gifford gives a different list: E.W Kenyon, A.A. Allen, Oral Roberts, T.L. Osborn, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland and John Avanzini. See Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London: Hurst & Co., 1998) 39. Only two names occur in both lists.

[9] I follow Mercy Amba Oduyoye in using 'primal religion' for what is often referred to as the traditional religions of Africa. This change is due to negative connotations that has accrued to the word, such as static, primitive and not modern. See, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1996) 57.

[10] Rijk A. Van Dijk, 'From Camp to Encompassment: Discourses of Transsubjectivity in the Ghanaian Pentecostal Diaspora,' *Journal of Religion in Africa* 27:2 (1997) 135-159.

[11] See, Anthonia Essien, 'New Religious Movements and the Gospel of Prosperity: The Nigerian Experience,' *The Oracle* 1:1 (2000) 40-46.

[12] Anderson's second criticism is the pragmatic template used in the Prosperity message for evaluating faith. Living faith is one that has results to show. What counts as result are material prosperity. Thirdly, Prosperity Message uses a proof-text method of Scriptural interpretation and even then it is selective. The Scriptural passages that speak of the faith of Abraham, for example, as an existential commitment to God regardless of result is passed over in silence, so also are the texts where Jesus warns against riches. Finally, he critiques the sociological implication of the Prosperity Message. The view of wealth as blessing and sign of faith can provide a spiritual justification for contempt for the poor who would be seen as causes of their poverty. Allan Anderson brings in personal experience to respond to the last charge. For him, the prosperity message demands that the wealthy share with the poor because of the belief that they prosper because they give. This shows immediately the limit of social engagement that can result from this spirituality. What is central is charity and no questions with regard to the structural causes of poverty. Cf. Allan Anderson, 'The Prosperity Message in the Eschatology of Some New Charismatic Churches,' *op. cit.*, 78-80.

[13] For similar views see, Karl Rahner, 'Theology and Anthropology,' *Theological Investigation* 9, trans. Graham Harrison (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972) 28-45, esp. 39. See also Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Dogma: Faith, Revelation, and Dogmatic Teaching Authority*, trans. Phillip Berryman (New York: Orbis Books, 1992) 234-237.

[14] Allan Anderson, *ibid.*, 80-82.

[15] In the Catholic theological tradition, for example, it was only in the Vatican II Council that the Church sought to come to terms with a world come of age. This meant sharing in the joys, the anxieties, and hopes of the world etc. It is interesting that it is secularization in Europe that forced theology to take the world seriously.

[16] See, Katrina Larkin, *The Eschatology of Second Zechariah: A Study of the Formation of a Mantological Wisdom Anthology* (Kampen: Pharos, 1994) 9-13.

[17] Adrio König, one of Anderson's sources tries to uphold the distinction between the eschatologies of the First and the Second Testament by speaking of the vision of 'integrated salvation' in the First Testament and of 'differentiated salvation' in the Second Testament. Adrio König, 'Healing as an Integral Part of Salvation,' quoted in Allan Anderson, *ibid.*, 80. Anderson however, smoothens this tension between the vision of the First and the Second Testaments. In my view, this tension ought to be kept. The Second Testament's dominant presentation of salvation is otherworldly or points persistently in that direction. There is ambiguity with regard to the world both in the Second Testament and in Christian theological tradition. On the one hand, the world is seen as God's creation, the sacrament of God, which is going to be re-created at the Eschaton. This is the

tradition in which one finds the powerful images of a new heaven and a new earth. Although this is new, but it is still the heaven and the earth that are new. Thus one can say that there is continuity even in the discontinuity with the old. On the other hand, the world is also presented as the domain of the forces opposed to God, as the domain of the Prince of this world. In this perspective, the destiny facing the world is conflagration. Every thing would be destroyed by fire. In other words, there is a radical discontinuity between life here and now and the life that is to come. This vision of cosmic cataclysm undercuts the basis of any valuation of earthly realities. The theological challenge is to hold both perspectives together. This is done in my view by acknowledging that the life of the Age come definitely as the outcome of God's recreative act. It is beyond all that can be known or imagined by human beings. This does not however void life here on earth of lasting significance nor make human effort to contribute to the realization of the Kingdom inefficacious. This needs to be more rigorously formulated. But that is not the theme of this essay.

[18] See Rosalind I.J. Hackett, 'Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation of Media Technologies in Nigeria and Ghana,' *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28:3 (1998) 258-277.

[19] Stephen U. Njoku, *Curses, Effects and Release, Your Key to a Blessed Life and Pastoral Care* (Enugu: Christian Living Publication, 1993).

[20] For a more detailed critique of this theology see my review of Stephen Njoku's books in *Oracle* 1:2 (2001) 148-151.

[21] To show that destiny cannot be changed: the Igbo refer to the lines on people's palms and say that it cannot be wiped out. People who suffer a lot of misfortune are also said to have 'ajo chi' - bad personal god. However to show that all is not determined to the minute details, they also say, 'onye kwe, chi ya ekwe' - if someone says yes, the personal god also says yes!

[22] For a discussion of the cultural roots of the Igbo enterprising spirit and hard work see J. Obi Oguejiofor, *The Influence of Igbo Traditional Religion on the Socio-political Character of the Igbo* (Nsukka: Fulladu, 1996) 18-20.

[23] From the point of view of the Christian Scriptures, he gives the discourse on providence an anti-work spin while this discourse is better interpreted as indicating the source and ground of trust in God and hope amidst difficulties.

[24] Herman Beseah Browne, *Theological Anthropology: A Dialectic Study of the African and Liberation Traditions* (London: Avon Books, 1996) 167-168. Subsequently, the page number of would be given in the text.

[25] In analogy to Christian theology, Browne speaks of ATT as African traditional God-talk, philosophical or fundamental theology. For him, it is the theo-logic of African Traditional Religion. He reconstructs this by engaging in what he calls a meta-anthropological search for the metaphysical presuppositions of the traditional beliefs. Cf. Herman Beseah Browne, *ibid.*, 11.

[26] This convergence is most likely not the result of a literary dependence. Rather, both authors are giving voice to the feeling of helplessness in the face of the complexity of the situation in Africa.

[27] It is worth noting that enlightenment thinking was non-existent and therefore not European till Descartes and his colleagues articulated it. Nor was Liberation Theology derivable from the Latin America culture. In fact, Browne hangs on his own tethers. He identifies liberation theology as indebted to enlightenment thinking. Peru, the home country of Gustavo Gutierrez was not part of the European enlightenment. If enlightenment thinking could be so appropriated into a different cultural context, what would prevent such an appropriation into the African context. One would thus have expected a discussion of the merits, demerits and direction of cultural transformation that would address the problems of Africa, and not a comparative analysis of his constructed African Traditional Theology and Liberation Theology.

[28] Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London: Hurst & Co, 1998) 40; Allan Anderson, 'The Prosperity Message,' *op. cit.*, 78.

[29] Stephen U. Njoku, *Curses, Effects, and Release, op. cit.*, 44.

[30] See Goran Hyden, 'African Studies in the Mid-1990's: Between Afro-Pessimism and Amero-Skepticism,' *African Studies Review* 39:2 (1996) 1-17.

[31] José Comblin recalls Yves Congar's remarks that the observers from the Eastern Churches criticised the absence of a pneumatology in the Vatican II Council. See, José Comblin, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation* trans. Paul Burns (Kent: Burns & Oates; Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1989) 16. Jürgen Moltmann draws attention to how the Holy Spirit was seen in Protestant theology only as a subjective principle for the appropriation of the salvation won objectively by Jesus on the cross. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress press, 1992) 83. Norman Pittinger traces this marginalization of the Holy Spirit back to early Christianity, see Norman Pittinger, *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1974) 11-12.

[32] José Comblin notes a series of dichotomies that arose therefrom: between Christology and pneumatology which resulted in Christomonism; between the Church and the world which resulted in atheism; the dualism between body and spirit which is at the basis of the option for an otherworldly spirituality. See José Comblin, *op. Cit.*, 13-19. See also Moltmann's discussion of the distinction between vitality and spirituality and how the lack of a balanced pneumatology tilted the Church's emphasis towards a spirituality of a 'not of this world' life in God and left out the dimension of vitality as a life lived out of God to be reclaimed by atheists who, as is to be expected, took this quest for the intensification of life away from the shadow of God. Jürgen Moltmann, *op. cit.*, 83-98.

[33] However one explains it, most Africans are pre-disposed from their cultural background to interpret the world and their experiences in terms of an interaction with spiritual beings. The first break with missionary Christianity, that is, Christianity as proposed by missionaries, occurred due to a lack of resonance between the world as imagined in Christianity and the African cultural world in which spiritual beings are integral. Indeed the missionary discourse was ambivalent. In its polemic against the deities and spirits of the primary religion, the missionary discourse presented them in line with Isaiah 44:9ff as illusions and products of human hands. On the other hand, it also demonised them and thus increased the population of the bad spirits. The effect of the discourse was to damn spirits that had hitherto been considered good or ambivalent. Missionary discourse thus brought a major disruption in the African world without providing the resources to deal with this. African independent Churches are the first wave of creative response to the changed circumstance.

[34] No line of approach seems promising and the biggest problem is how to build up social capital for financing the social reconstruction. Francis Fukuyama, defines social capital as 'an instantiated set of informal values or norms shared among members of a group that permits them to cooperate with one another. If members of the group come to expect that others will behave reliably and honestly, then they will come to *trust* one another. Trust acts like a lubricant that makes any group or organisation run more efficiently.' Francis Fukuyama, 'Social Capital,' *Culture Matters, How Values Shape Human Progress* ed. Lawrence E. Harrison & Samuel P. Huntington (New York: Basic Books, 2000) 98. Because this social capital is in short supply, commitment to the national recovery and development is lacking. Groups and individuals are struggling to maximise their capital

[35] See Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977, 1997). One may argue that the disorder consists in the inordinate nature of the drive. But even the translation of *libido dominandi* as lust for power instead of lust for domination reveals the root of the suspicion against power.

[36] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990).

[37] Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London & Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1974) 9.

[38] Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984) 15. This notion of power is however criticised as not appropriate for understanding the social dimension of power. This criticism arises from a desire not to lose sight of the inequality and domination that are common in human society. This can however be done without identifying power with domination by calling attention to the differential in access to and control of resources and social capital, which are at the base of social inequality and domination. See, Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power,' Afterword in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982) 220.

[39] Kenichi Ohmae puts it succinctly. He writes, 'admittedly, had there been no computers, the new continent [his metaphor for the new economy] would never have come to pass. The technologies were necessary for it to exist. *But they were not sufficient.* Even with the change in technologies, other things might have happened to prevent the new continent from emerging. Keynesian economics might have been reinforced by a long period of deflation in the 1970s. The Thatcher/Reagan revolution, and the wave of deregulation that went with it, might never have taken place. Entrepreneurialism might not have been reinforced by the global awarding of platform status to the American dollar.' Kenichi Ohmae, *The Invisible Continent: Four Strategic Imperatives of the New Economy* (New York: HarperCollins Book, 2000) 3.

[40] Biblical scholars report that of the books of the First Testament, the book of Zachariah is the most quoted in the Gospel narrative of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. At the same time, it is 'according to general consensus, ...one of the most obscure in the Bible.' Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Rebuilding with Hope: A Commentary on the Books of Haggai and Zechariah* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, Edinburgh: Handsel, 1988) 46. The pericope in which the verse occurs is also acknowledged to be an interpolation 'so inconsistent with its context (the vision of a candlestick flanked by olive trees) that translators of the *JB* and the *NEB* rearrange the text, and scholars are overwhelmingly of the opinion that the verses constitute a later addition.' See Paul L. Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: The New Century Bible Commentary* (London: Marshall Pickering, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995) 39. These critical comments notwithstanding, it suffices to

remark with Carroll Stuhlmueller that theological reasoning takes its point of departure from the bible as received from Israel and the early Church. One does not need to start with the special traditions or the various redactions. See Carroll Stuhlmueller, *op. cit.*, 83.

[41] Other instances in the Scripture of the gift of the Holy Spirit indicate that divine and human agency are not traded off one against the other. In Judges 3:10; 6:34; 7:2: 13:25, are narratives about the Spirit of God enabling the military leaders to be victorious in war.

[42] Krister Stendahl, *Energy for Life: Reflections on the Theme ?Come, Holy Spirit - Renew the Whole Creation* (Geneva: WCC publication, 1990). Stendahl preferred energy to power because of the association of power with domination.

[43] Bible scholars contest this Lucan account of the Christian Urgemeinde. They point out some of the contradictions in the account. Some of the members were selling their property, others are keeping their houses and where community gathered. Act 12,12-14. May be, the later came after the failure of the communitarian system of social organisation.

[44] Aspects of the debate and reflections on this christological issue can be gleaned from the article of Dennis Ferrara, ??Hypostatized in the Logos?: Leontius of Byzantium, Leontius of Jerusalem and the Unfinished Business of the Council of Chalcedon,? *Louvain Studies* 22 (1997) 311-327.

[45] For Christians in Europe, this may recall Feuerbach's humanism (*Menschendienst ist Gottesdienst*). But must this legitimate vision from the Christian tradition be abandoned because atheistic humanism challenged a lop-sided presentation of Christianity? I do not think that that is necessary. This history can even be seen as the mediation through atheistic humanism of a dimension of the implication of God's revelation in Jesus which was forgotten in the history of the Church.

[46] Anthonia Essien's criticism that this spirituality is preaching a cross-less Christianity still stands. However, my point is that the imbalance can be remedied.

[47] This aspect is not well developed in the paper but forms the background of the reflection.