

# Neo-Pentecostal Doctrines Embraced by An African Independent Church: A Study of The Holy Spirit Church in Kakamega County, Kenya

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*Abstract- Neo-Pentecostalism has reshaped the religious life of sub-Saharan Africa, and its influence has increasingly extended to the older mission and African independent churches of Kenya. This study examined the particular Neo-Pentecostal doctrines that have been embraced by the Holy Spirit Church, an African independent church in Kakamega County, Kenya, and the extent to which the members hold them. The study was guided by the globalisation theory, the theory of religious hybridity and the diffusion of innovations theory, and it adopted a mixed-methods case-study design. Data were collected from 117 church members through a questionnaire and from 12 church leaders through interviews, and were supplemented by document analysis and non-participant observation. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and qualitative data through thematic analysis, after which the findings of the four sources were triangulated. The study found that the church has embraced a definable set of Neo-Pentecostal doctrines, returning an overall mean of 4.09 on a five-point scale. The strongest emphasis was on personal salvation and the born-again experience, expressive worship, divine healing, and the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts, while the teaching on material prosperity was the least emphasised and the most contested. The doctrines were found to have entered the church informally, through crusades, the media and Pentecostal-trained leaders, and their adoption had produced tension between younger and older members over the standing of the founding doctrines. The study concludes that the church has selectively embraced Neo-Pentecostal doctrines while seeking to retain its inherited identity, and it offers recommendations for safeguarding that identity while engaging the renewal the church has welcomed.*

**Keywords:** *Neo-Pentecostalism, Doctrines, African Independent Churches, Religious Hybridity, Diffusion of Innovations, Holy Spirit Church, Kenya*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity has become one of the fastest-growing and most influential streams of the global church, and in the past four decades it has acquired a distinctly Neo-Pentecostal expression marked by an intense focus on the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts, on divine healing and deliverance, on expressive and media-rich worship and, in many quarters, on the promise of material prosperity (Anderson, 2018; Miller & Yamamori, 2017).

Where classical Pentecostalism grew largely through denominational mission, the Neo-Pentecostal current has spread through independent ministries, crusades and the mass media, crossing denominational boundaries and reshaping the worship and theology of churches that did not begin as Pentecostal (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2022).

Africa has been one of the principal sites of this expansion. The continent now hosts some of the largest and most dynamic Pentecostal-Charismatic communities in the world, and their teachings circulate rapidly through television, radio and social media (Haustein & Wilkinson, 2023; Ojo, 2024). Recent scholarship has drawn attention to the role of digital and broadcast technology in extending the reach of these doctrines and in shaping the expectations that ordinary believers bring to their own congregations (Battista, 2024; Mudau & Tshifhumulo, 2025).

The result is a religious environment in which the doctrines associated with high-profile Neo-Pentecostal ministries are increasingly familiar to

members of ordinary local churches (Mwangi & Mugambi, 2024).

In Kenya, the Neo-Pentecostal turn has been particularly visible. Studies of Kenyan Christianity describe a shifting religious landscape in which Pentecostal styles of worship, leadership and teaching have penetrated the older mission churches and the African independent churches alike (Gathogo, 2021, 2022).

The influence has been carried by Pentecostal-trained ministers, by student and youth movements, and by the pervasive presence of televangelism (Mugambi, 2023; Parsitau & van Klinken, 2018). For many established Kenyan congregations, the question is no longer whether Neo-Pentecostal doctrines will be encountered, but which of them will be adopted and how they will sit alongside the inherited tradition.

African independent churches occupy a particular place in this story. Founded by African Christians as a deliberate alternative to mission Christianity, these churches were built on their own distinctive doctrines, forms of worship and structures of authority, and they have long regarded the preservation of that founding identity as central to their existence (Ochieng, 2021; Ojo, 2024).

When Neo-Pentecostal teachings enter such a church, they meet an existing body of doctrine and practice, and the encounter raises questions about continuity, identity and change. The Holy Spirit Church in Kakamega County is one such African independent church, and over time it has taken on a range of teachings associated with Neo-Pentecostalism.

Not all of these teachings have been received in the same way. The doctrines concerning the Holy Spirit, healing and deliverance have generally been welcomed, while the prosperity gospel has proved more contentious, attracting both enthusiasm and theological criticism across African Pentecostalism (Barron, 2022; Nel, 2020).

Other practices, such as the use of ritual objects and the prominence given to deliverance, have prompted debate about syncretism and about the boundary between Christian faith and inherited cultural forms

(Esoh, 2023; Kgatele & Ngubane, 2023). Even the healing tradition, long central to African Pentecostalism, continues to be re-examined in the light of changing understandings of medicine and faith (Ayivor, 2025). These debates indicate that the adoption of Neo-Pentecostal doctrines is rarely uniform and is often accompanied by tension.

Despite the breadth of scholarship on African Pentecostalism, most studies have concentrated on classical Pentecostal denominations, on large urban ministries or on the movement considered as a whole, while the quieter penetration of Neo-Pentecostal doctrines into specific African independent churches has received comparatively little attention, and fewer studies still have measured how strongly ordinary members of such a church hold these doctrines.

This is a notable omission, because the African independent churches were founded precisely to preserve a distinctive identity, and the doctrines they adopt or resist bear directly on whether that identity endures. This study addresses the gap by focusing on a single African independent church and combining a member survey with qualitative inquiry, so that the doctrinal change can be both measured and interpreted.

The objective reported in this paper was to identify the particular Neo-Pentecostal doctrines embraced by the Holy Spirit Church in Kakamega County, and to establish the extent to which the members hold them. The findings are intended to be of value both to the scholarship on doctrinal change in African Christianity and to the church itself as it considers how to respond to the transformation it has undergone.

## II. THEORETICAL REVIEW

No single theory adequately captures the whole of the process by which a church takes on new doctrines, since that process involves the arrival of ideas from outside the congregation, their spread within it, and their accommodation alongside a tradition that is already in place.

For this reason, the study drew on three complementary theories, each of which illuminates

one moment in that process. These are the globalisation theory, which accounts for how external religious ideas reach a local church; the diffusion of innovations theory, which accounts for how they spread within it; and the theory of religious hybridity, which accounts for how they combine with the doctrines already held. Read together rather than in isolation, the three theories provide a fuller account of doctrinal change in an African independent church than any one of them could provide alone.

### 2.1 Globalisation Theory

The globalisation theory, associated with Roland Robertson (1992), was developed to explain the growing interconnectedness of the contemporary world. It holds that economic, cultural and religious ideas, practices and images now circulate rapidly across national and institutional boundaries, so that what is produced in one setting is quickly taken up in another and the local and the global are drawn into a single field of interaction.

The theory is relevant to the present study because it accounts for the way Neo-Pentecostal doctrines, generated in large ministries and broadcast through television, radio and social media, have reached a local African independent church in western Kenya. It frames the Holy Spirit Church not as an isolated congregation but as a local site on which globally circulating religious ideas have come to rest.

The strength of the theory lies in its capacity to explain the speed and the trans-denominational character of religious change, and in the weight, it gives to the media and to mobile ministers as carriers of doctrine across boundaries.

Its principal weakness is a tendency to over-emphasise global flows and to portray local communities as passive recipients, thereby underplaying the agency of the local church in choosing what to accept and what to resist. In the present study this weakness was mitigated by pairing the globalisation theory with the diffusion of innovations theory and the theory of religious hybridity, which together restore attention to how the church internally received, negotiated and selectively adopted the incoming doctrines.

### 2.2 Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The diffusion of innovations theory, associated with Everett Rogers (2003), sets out how new ideas and practices spread through a social system over time. It explains that an innovation is communicated through particular channels among the members of a social system, that individuals adopt it at different rates, ranging from early adopters to later and more reluctant ones, and that the characteristics of the innovation and the influence of opinion leaders shape whether and how quickly it is taken up.

The theory is directly relevant to the manner in which Neo-Pentecostal doctrines entered the Holy Spirit Church, namely informally and gradually, through fellowship, the media and Pentecostal-trained leaders who acted as opinion leaders, and to the observation that younger members adopted the new teachings more readily than older members.

Its strength is that it explains the channels and the uneven pace of adoption, providing a clear vocabulary for describing why some members embraced the doctrines quickly while others held back.

Its weakness is that it was developed largely with reference to technological and commercial innovations and can treat adoption as a relatively neutral, individual decision, paying less attention to the theological convictions and communal loyalties that are at stake in religious change. This weakness was mitigated by reading the theory alongside the theory of religious hybridity, which foregrounds the theological and identity-related dimensions of the encounter between the new doctrines and the founding tradition of the church.

### 2.3 Theory of Religious Hybridity

The theory of hybridity, associated with Homi Bhabha (1994), arose from the study of cultural encounter and has been widely applied to religion as the theory of religious hybridity. It holds that when one tradition encounters another, the outcome is rarely the simple replacement of one by the other but more often a blending, in which elements of both are combined to produce a new, hybrid form that carries features of each. The theory is relevant because the Holy Spirit Church is an African-founded church

with its own founding doctrines that has been exposed to Neo-Pentecostal teaching, and its present character is best understood as a hybrid in which inherited and Neo-Pentecostal elements coexist rather than as a wholesale conversion to Neo-Pentecostalism.

The theory is strong in capturing continuity within change, and it explains why the church could adopt new doctrines while still wishing to protect the practices of its founders. Its weakness is that the concept of hybridity can be difficult to operationalise and may obscure the unequal power between a dominant incoming tradition and a smaller host church, presenting the blending as smoother and more balanced than it is.

This weakness was mitigated by attending directly to the tensions reported by members and leaders, especially the generational disagreement over the founding doctrines, so that hybridity was treated as a contested process rather than a settled and harmonious outcome.

### III. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

This section reviews six studies of Neo-Pentecostalism in Africa, with particular attention to the Kenyan context, and identifies the gap that the present study addresses. For each study the authors and year, the title, the country, the methodology, the principal findings and the research gap are stated.

Ochieng (2021) examined the theological transformation of indigenous churches in Western Kenya, using a qualitative case study that drew on interviews and observation. The study reported that Neo-Pentecostal influence had reshaped the theology and worship of these churches, bringing a stronger emphasis on the Spirit, on healing and on deliverance.

Its value notwithstanding, the study treated the indigenous churches of the region collectively and remained largely descriptive, and it did not measure how strongly the members of any one church had taken up specific doctrines, which is the question the present study pursues.

In a related Kenyan study, Mwila (2023) investigated the impact of Pentecostal spirituality on the Methodist Church in the Nyambene Synod through a qualitative case-study approach. The study found that Pentecostal spirituality had penetrated an older mission church, influenced its worship and contributed to shifts in members' affiliation. The focus, however, fell on a mainline mission church and on the question of changing affiliation rather than on the body of doctrine that an African independent church takes on, so that the doctrinal question this paper addresses was left open.

Kiprotich and Wanjiku (2019) explored the relationship between Pentecostalism and identity among urban youth in Nairobi, drawing on a qualitative case study. They found that participation in Pentecostal churches reshaped the religious and social identity of young people. Because the study concentrated on urban youth and on the question of identity, it did not consider how an established church and its wider membership take on Neo-Pentecostal doctrines, nor did it examine an independent church of the kind studied here.

Nkansah-Obrempong and Pam (2021) studied the effect of pastors' theological training on the growth challenges of Pentecostal churches in selected Nairobi congregations, using a case-study design that combined interviews and questionnaires. The study concluded that the level of pastors' theological training shaped how the churches managed their growth and their teaching. Its concern, however, was with pastoral training and church growth rather than with the substance of the doctrines that members adopt, and it was set among Pentecostal rather than independent churches.

More recently, Kinoti, Kagema and Orina (2024) examined the impact of the prosperity gospel on political attitudes in selected Neo-Pentecostal movements in Karingani Ward, Tharaka Nithi County, combining survey and qualitative methods.

They found that the prosperity teaching shaped members' political expectations and choices. By isolating the prosperity doctrine and its political effects, however, the study did not address the wider

set of Neo-Pentecostal doctrines that a single church embraces, which the present study sets out to map.

Finally, Henry, Gathogo and Munyao (2025) investigated the risk and protective factors affecting church growth from the perspective of leaders of selected Pentecostal churches in Kenya, using a qualitative design. They found that doctrinal and leadership factors operated as both risks to and protections for growth. The study drew, however, only on the views of leaders and was directed at the question of growth, rather than at the doctrines adopted by the general membership, whose perspective the present study incorporates alongside that of the leaders.

Taken together, these studies confirm that Neo-Pentecostalism has had a marked effect on Kenyan churches, but they leave a clear gap. None of them measures, at the level of the ordinary member and within a single African independent church, the particular Neo-Pentecostal doctrines that have been embraced and the strength with which they are held, and none combines a member survey with leader interviews, document analysis and observation for this purpose.

The present study was designed to fill that gap. It does so by focusing on a single church and by combining quantitative and qualitative evidence, so that the breadth of the adoption and the reasons that lie behind it can be examined together.

#### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed-methods case-study design, treating the Holy Spirit Church in Kakamega County as a single case and combining a descriptive survey with qualitative inquiry so that the strengths of each approach could compensate for the limitations of the other (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The target population comprised the members and the leaders of the church.

A total of 150 questionnaires were administered to members, of which 117 were returned and found usable, giving a return rate of 78.0 per cent, which is above the level commonly regarded as adequate for survey-based analysis. The questionnaire presented

members with statements about Neo-Pentecostal doctrines, to which they responded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In addition, 12 church leaders and officials were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule, and the survey and interviews were supplemented by an analysis of church documents and by non-participant observation of worship services and church events, so that members' self-reports could be checked against documentary and observed evidence.

The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, namely frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, while the qualitative data from the interviews, documents and observation were analysed thematically following the reflexive approach of Braun and Clarke (2021), through which codes were generated from the data and organised into themes and sub-themes.

The findings of the four sources were then triangulated, allowing convergence and divergence between the survey, the interviews, the documents and the observation to be identified. Ethical requirements were observed throughout the study: participation was voluntary and based on informed consent, confidentiality was assured, and the identities of the interviewees were protected through codes, with the church leaders cited in this paper as KL-01 to KL-12.

#### V. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

The findings are presented in two parts. The first reports the quantitative results on the doctrines embraced, describing the figures, interpreting them and discussing them in the light of the literature. The second presents the qualitative findings as the reported accounts of the church leaders, each statement likewise introduced, interpreted and discussed.

**5.1 Quantitative Findings on the Doctrines Embraced**  
The questionnaire results showed that the Holy Spirit Church has embraced a definable set of Neo-Pentecostal doctrines. Across the eight doctrinal statements, the mean ratings ranged from 3.71 to 4.32 and returned a grand mean of 4.09 on the five-point

scale, indicating broad agreement among the members that the doctrines are emphasised in the

church. The results for each statement are presented in Table 1.

Table 1  
 Descriptive Statistics on the Neo-Pentecostal Doctrines Embraced by the Holy Spirit Church

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
The church emphasises personal salvation and being born again.	2	5	8	40	62	4.32	0.91
Worship is expressive, with clapping, dancing and loud praise.	3	7	9	38	60	4.24	1.01
Divine healing and miracles are central to the church's worship.	3	6	11	39	58	4.22	0.99
Speaking in tongues is emphasised as evidence of the Holy Spirit.	3	7	12	41	54	4.16	1.01
The baptism of the Holy Spirit is taught as a distinct experience.	3	8	12	43	51	4.12	1.02
Deliverance from demonic powers and spiritual warfare are emphasised.	4	8	14	42	49	4.06	1.06
Prophecy and personal revelation are a normal part of church life.	5	11	17	40	44	3.91	1.13
The church teaches that faith leads to material prosperity.	8	15	19	36	39	3.71	1.25
Grand mean						4.09	1.05

Note. Sample size  $n = 117$ . Response categories: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation. Field data (2026).

As Table 1 shows, the eight doctrinal statements all attracted mean ratings in the agreement range, from a low of 3.71 to a high of 4.32, and together returned a grand mean of 4.09. The emphasis on personal salvation and being born again recorded the highest mean of 4.32 and the smallest standard deviation of 0.91, followed by expressive worship at 4.24, divine healing and miracles at 4.22, speaking in tongues at 4.16 and the baptism of the Holy Spirit at 4.12.

Deliverance from demonic powers and spiritual warfare returned a mean of 4.06, and prophecy and personal revelation a mean of 3.91. The teaching that faith leads to material prosperity recorded the lowest mean of 3.71 and the largest standard deviation of 1.25; on this item, 75 of the 117 members agreed or strongly agreed, 23 disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 19 were neutral, whereas on every other item the proportion in agreement was higher and the proportion in disagreement smaller.

The figures indicate that the church has embraced a definable and substantial body of Neo-Pentecostal doctrine rather than a few isolated practices, since every statement was affirmed and the grand mean of

4.09 sits firmly in the agreement range. The order of the means is itself revealing.

The doctrines that describe the inward experience of salvation and the visible life of worship, namely the born-again experience, expressive worship, healing and the gifts of the Spirit, occupy the upper band of the ranking, while the doctrines that make stronger claims about the believer's circumstances in the world, namely prophecy and, above all, prosperity, fall to the lower end. The very low dispersion on the salvation item shows that the members agree about it more closely than about any other, which suggests that the born-again emphasis functions as the stable foundation upon which the more recently adopted teachings have been built, whereas the wide dispersion on the prosperity item shows that the church is genuinely divided over that teaching rather than merely uncertain about it. Taken together, the pattern points to a selective rather than an indiscriminate adoption, in which the church has most readily embraced the doctrines that deepen its existing devotional life and has been more guarded towards those that introduce new and contestable expectations.

These findings accord with, and in places qualify, the wider literature. The primacy of the born-again experience is consistent with Elorm-Donkor (2017), who identifies personal salvation as the foundational emphasis of African Pentecostal Christianity, although the result also invites the caution of Wariboko (2018), who warns that an emphasis on individual salvation, held in isolation, can underplay the social dimensions of the gospel.

The strong affirmation of expressive worship, healing and the gifts reflects what Asamoah-Gyadu (2022) treats as the characteristic outcomes of Neo-Pentecostal influence on African churches, and what Anderson (2018) identifies as the routine exercise of the charismata that marks Pentecostal congregational practice, while the leaders' concern that some members pursue the gifts and neglect the study of the Word echoes Ngong (2017), who calls for sustained biblical teaching to accompany the experiential focus.

The contested standing of the prosperity teaching mirrors a wider debate, for its presence is in keeping with Togarasei (2018) and Nel (2020), who document the spread of the prosperity gospel across Africa, while the division among the members reflects the reservations of Parsitau and van Klinken (2018) and the critical concern of Resane (2017), who argues that the prosperity message should be subjected to careful theological scrutiny rather than accepted uncritically.

That a small African independent church should reproduce the same hierarchy of emphasis and the same fault line found in the broader movement suggests, with Gathogo (2022), that established churches tend to blend new influences with their inherited doctrines rather than abandon them. The convergence of the survey, the interviews, the documents and the observation on this point gives the conclusion a firmer basis than any single source could provide.

## 5.2 Qualitative Findings

The thematic analysis of the interviews, the church documents and the observation produced three themes, namely the doctrines the church has embraced, the channels through which they were adopted, and the tensions they have created over the

founding doctrines. These are presented below through the reported accounts of the leaders, with each statement introduced, interpreted and then discussed in the light of the literature.

Asked what now defines the church, the leaders placed the Holy Spirit at the centre.

One of them reported that everything the church now does centres on the Holy Spirit, and that the church teaches a congregation without the Spirit to be spiritually dead (KL-01).

The work of the Spirit has become the organising principle of the worship and the self-understanding of the church, so that the congregation now measures its life by the presence of the Spirit. This confirms the high rating given to the Spirit-centred doctrines in the survey.

The finding accords with Anderson (2018), who identifies the centrality of the Spirit and the routine exercise of the gifts as a defining mark of Pentecostal congregational practice.

The exercise of the spiritual gifts was described as a normal and expected part of worship.

One leader explained that prophecy, speaking in tongues and words of knowledge are now part of how the church worships, and that the congregation has come to expect them (KL-06).

The gifts are no longer occasional or exceptional but routine, and the expectation of their manifestation now shapes the form of the services themselves.

This reflects Asamoah-Gyadu (2022), who treats the active exercise of the charismata in worship as a characteristic outcome of Neo-Pentecostal influence on African churches.

Healing was identified as a principal reason members are drawn to the church.

One leader explained that many people come to the church because of sickness, that the sick are prayed for in every service, and that members testify to having received healing (KL-05).

Healing functions both as a doctrine and as a point of attraction, drawing newcomers to the church and reinforcing the faith of existing members through reported testimony.

This is consistent with the enduring centrality of healing in African Pentecostalism examined by Ayivor (2025), even as the relationship between faith and medicine continues to be reworked.

Deliverance and spiritual warfare were reported to have become a settled ministry of the church.

One leader noted that the church holds deliverance sessions for members troubled by evil spirits or bound by problems from their past, and that prayer for deliverance has become part of its normal ministry (KL-07).

A spiritual-warfare framework, in which affliction is traced to spiritual causes, has been absorbed into the regular life of the church and now informs how members understand their difficulties.

This corresponds to the prominence of deliverance in African Neo-Pentecostalism discussed by Esoh (2023), although the leaders also recognised that not every difficulty is spiritual in origin and that medical and counselling care have their place.

The prosperity teaching, by contrast, was approached with caution, and the reservation came from the leaders themselves.

One of them explained that he is careful with the prosperity message because the gospel is not about money, warning that, when it is preached wrongly, it gives members false expectations and leaves them discouraged when the blessings do not come (KL-12).

The prosperity message is present in the church but qualified, and the division recorded in the survey reflects a considered theological judgement among the leaders rather than mere unfamiliarity.

This mirrors the critical concern of Resane (2017) and Barron (2022), who argue that the prosperity

gospel should be subjected to careful theological scrutiny rather than accepted uncritically.

On how the doctrines entered the church, the leaders were clear that no formal decision had been taken.

One explained that no one had sat down and decided to bring the doctrines in, but that they had come slowly, through fellowship with other churches and through what members watch and hear outside (KL-09).

The doctrines spread informally, through ordinary social contact rather than official policy, and were absorbed gradually over a long period.

This supports the diffusion of innovations account of religious change and is consistent with Anderson (2018), who observes that Pentecostal teachings often spread through fellowship rather than through formal channels.

The media were singled out as a powerful channel shaping the expectations of members.

One leader observed that television and social media have played a large part, that members arrive with expectations formed by what they have seen from popular preachers, and that the leaders have had to respond to this (KL-11).

Globally circulating religious media reached the local congregation and reshaped what its members expected of their own church, so that the leaders found themselves responding to influences from well beyond the parish.

This echoes recent work on the technological extension of African Pentecostalism by Battista (2024) and Mudau and Tshifhumulo (2025), and illustrates the globalisation of religious influence.

The adoption of the new doctrines was not without cost, and some leaders feared for the founding teachings.

One lamented that the church was founded with its own way of worship and its own teachings, and that some members feel the new doctrines are slowly

pushing aside the practices the founders left behind (KL-02).

Older members experience the change as a threat to the identity the founders established, so that the very speed of adoption has become a source of disagreement within the congregation.

This is the strain that the theory of religious hybridity anticipates, in which an incoming tradition is felt to press upon the host tradition rather than to merge with it smoothly (Bhabha, 1994).

Other leaders, however, saw the change as a workable blending of the old and the new.

One reflected that he does not see it only as a problem, since the church has found a way of bringing together the old and the new, keeping much of its identity while also growing with the times (KL-10).

The church has not abandoned its tradition but combined it with the new teachings, holding the two together in a single, if contested, identity.

This illustrates the religious hybridity described by Gathogo (2022), who argues that established churches tend to blend new influences with their inherited doctrines rather than discard them, a reading borne out by the documentary and observational evidence, in which church notices advertised healing, deliverance and Spirit-filled worship while the prosperity theme remained far less prominent. Taken together, the reported accounts of the leaders not only confirm the survey but explain it, showing how a church can take on a substantial body of new doctrine while still striving to remain itself.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the Holy Spirit Church has embraced a definable and substantial set of Neo-Pentecostal doctrines. The doctrines centred on the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts, on divine healing and deliverance, on expressive worship and on the born-again experience were adopted most fully, with personal salvation remaining the foundation, while the prosperity teaching was received only partially and with marked division among the members. The

grand mean of 4.09 confirms that the adoption is broad rather than superficial, and that the church has taken on a coherent body of Neo-Pentecostal doctrine rather than a few isolated practices.

The study further concludes that the doctrines were adopted informally, through fellowship, the media and Pentecostal-trained leaders, rather than through any formal decision, and that their adoption has produced a hybrid church in which inherited and Neo-Pentecostal elements coexist.

This hybridity is not without strain, for the speed of the change has created tension between younger members, who embrace the new teachings, and older members, who fear for the founding doctrines of the church. The church therefore stands at a point where it must decide how to hold together the renewal it has welcomed and the identity on which it was founded, and the management of this tension, rather than the fact of change itself, is the central pastoral and institutional challenge that the findings disclose.

Read through the theoretical framework that guided the study, the three theories together account for what the evidence shows. The globalisation theory explains how the doctrines reached the church, carried by the media and by mobile, Pentecostal-trained ministers; the diffusion of innovations theory explains why they were taken up informally and at an uneven pace, most readily by the younger members; and the theory of religious hybridity explains why the church now holds the new doctrines alongside its founding tradition in a single, contested identity.

The value of holding the three together is that each illuminates a different moment in the same process, so that the change is seen to be neither a simple loss of identity nor an untroubled modernisation but a selective and negotiated adoption.

In this the study makes a specific contribution. Where much of the existing scholarship on African Pentecostalism has examined classical denominations or large urban ministries, the present study has measured, at the level of the ordinary member and within a single African independent church, which Neo-Pentecostal doctrines have been embraced and how strongly they are held, and it has corroborated

that measurement with the testimony of leaders, the evidence of documents and the record of observation. It therefore offers both an approach and a set of findings on which further studies of independent churches can build.

Two limitations of the study should be acknowledged, since they bear on how the findings are read. First, the study examined a single African independent church, so the findings describe the Holy Spirit Church in detail rather than offering a basis for statistical generalisation to all such churches; their value lies in the depth of the case and in the patterns, it reveals, which other studies can test elsewhere.

Second, the survey measured the strength of agreement with statements about the doctrines rather than the depth of members' theological understanding of them, so the high ratings should be read as evidence of emphasis and acceptance rather than of doctrinal sophistication. These limitations do not weaken the central conclusion, but they mark the boundaries within which it holds and they point to the value of comparative and longitudinal work in this area.

Finally, the study concludes that the experience of the Holy Spirit Church is likely to be instructive beyond its own walls. As an African independent church that has taken on a substantial body of Neo-Pentecostal doctrine while striving to keep its founding identity, it exemplifies a process that many established African churches are undergoing.

The way it negotiates the coexistence of the old and the new, and the success or failure of that negotiation, will therefore be of interest not only to its own members and leaders but also to the wider study of doctrinal change in African Christianity. What the findings make clear is that such change, in this church at least, has been real, broad and selective, and that its future course will depend less on the doctrines themselves than on how wisely the church chooses to hold them together.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

On the strength of these findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. The church should strengthen the deliberate teaching of its founding doctrines alongside the new emphases, so that the inherited identity is consciously preserved rather than allowed to fade as the new doctrines spread. This could take the form of regular catechetical instruction and of teaching occasions that set out the history, the distinctive doctrines and the practices the founders established, so that each generation receives them deliberately rather than by assumption.
2. The church should accompany its strong experiential focus with sustained biblical and doctrinal teaching, so that the emphasis on the Spirit and the gifts is matched by a corresponding grounding in Scripture. A programme of systematic Bible study and expository preaching would help to ensure that the pursuit of the gifts does not displace the study of the Word, a balance that the leaders themselves identified as a concern.
3. The church should address the prosperity teaching through careful and balanced instruction that distinguishes biblical generosity from a transactional view of giving, so that the members are neither divided nor given false expectations. Teaching on stewardship and contentment, set within a sound doctrine of God's provision, would allow the church to affirm God's care for its members without encouraging the materialistic distortions that several leaders warned against.
4. The church should retain and regulate its healing and deliverance ministry while integrating counselling and a recognition of the place of medical care, so that members receive whole-person support and are not encouraged to spiritualise every problem. Clear guidance on when to pray, when to counsel and when to refer for medical attention would protect vulnerable members and preserve the credibility of the ministry.
5. The church should establish a structured forum for dialogue between younger and older members, so that the generational tension created by the new doctrines is addressed openly and the experience of the founders is carried into the life of the present church. Regular intergenerational meetings, in which both the value of the inherited tradition and the appeal of the new emphases can

be heard, would help the congregation to negotiate change together rather than divide over it.

6. The church should put in place a clear and orderly process for assessing new teachings before they are absorbed, so that future doctrinal change is guided rather than left to informal diffusion. A standing body of leaders charged with weighing new teachings against the confession of the church before they are adopted would give the congregation a measure of control over its own doctrinal direction.
7. Further research should extend this study to other African independent churches and should examine, over time, how the balance between inherited and Neo-Pentecostal doctrines develops. Comparative and longitudinal studies of this kind would establish whether the selective pattern of adoption found here is typical of the wider category of independent churches and would build a fuller picture of doctrinal change in African Christianity.

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