

THE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH IN THE CONGO/30 ÈME COMMUNAUTE : ENGAGING IN POVERTY ERADICATION

Kakwata, Frederick (2014-12)

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THESIS

ENGLISH ABSTRACT: Despite the excessive mineral wealth, the underground deposits of gold, diamonds, copper and cobalt and other valuable minerals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo which are coveted by many countries, the majority of the population is still destitute and lives in dire poverty. However the country itself prospered during the colonial period 1885-1960 and it became the second most industrialized state in Africa after South Africa (Petit & Mutambwa, 2005). Unfortunately it is now ranked among the world's poorest countries in the world. Since the Democratic Republic of the Congo gained independence in 1960 it has not experienced development that benefits the whole population. The country is experiencing continuing and pressing problems of poverty and human suffering. Thus the purpose during this study is to analyse the position of the Pentecostal Church in the Congo (30ème CPCO) concerning the situation of poverty in the city of Lubumbashi and to design a pragmatic approach that can assist the denomination to find ways to effectively address the problem of poverty. Findings reveal that the city of Lubumbashi is riddled with complex socio-economic challenges, but the 30 ème CPCO is not equipped practically or theologically to address these challenges. Poverty in the city of Lubumbashi is pervasive, it is therefore structural and historical. It comes a long way, from the slavery, to colonization, to dictatorship, neo-colonization and globalization. Sin and lovelessness have been identified as the roots causes of poverty in the DRC in the sense that sin which is the opposite of love is the driving force behind the oppressive structures that have impoverished millions of people in the DRC and around the world. Furthermore findings also disclose that the understanding of the soteriology within the Pentecostal denomination theology is problematic. Salvation is understood as being spiritual only, the physical aspect is misapprehended. In addition there is a heretical prosperity gospel in the denomination which teaches that poverty is the result of personal sin and unfaithfulness to tithing. They believe that giving large amounts of money will release blessings and prosperity. This view has skewed the denomination's approach towards the eradication of poverty. As a result the 30 ème CPCO's involvement in poverty eradication is described as rudimentary, it is limited to sporadic assistance to the poor. Although the 30 ème CPCO station of Lubumbashi as a whole has been sporadically giving assistance to the poor, there are many factors that have restricted its ability to effectively engage in poverty eradication amongst which is poor understanding of the root causes of poverty. This in fact is influenced by the perception of poverty which is subject to features such as the mentality of the people or the level of literacy, the environment, the world view, the circumstances, the culture etc. The inability of the 30 ème CPCO to address poverty is also due to lack of enough education, poor administration, financial issues, lack of partners to help with the development and cooperation between congregations.

AFRIKAANSE OPSOMMING: Ten spyte van groot minerale rykdom, die ondergrondse bronne van goud, diamante, koper kobalt en ander minerale, wat deur ander lande begeer word, leef die oorgrote meerderheid van die bevolking van die Demokratiese Republiek van die Kongo in armoede. Tydens die koloniale tydperk (1885–1960) het die Kongo tog vooruitgegaan en die tweede mees industrieë in Afrika, na Suid-Afrika, besit. Dus was dit die doel tydens hierdie studie om die posisie van die Pinkster Kerk in die Kongo (30 ème CPCO) betreffende die armoede stuiasie in die stad Lubumbashi te bepaal en om maniere te vind waarop 'n pragmatiese benadering tot armoede gevolg kan word. Daar is bevind dat die stad Lubumbashi baie komplekse sosio-ekonomiese uitdagings in die gesig staar, maar dat die 30 ème CPCO nie bevoeg is om daardie uitdagings op 'n praktiese wyse of 'n teologiese wyse aan te spreek nie. Die armoede in die stad kan oral gesien word, dit is struktureel en histories. Hierdie armoede gaan ver terug, na slawery, kolonisasie diktatorskap, neo-liberalisme en globalisasie. Sonde en liefdeloosheid word gesien as hoofsaake van armoede in die Demokratiese Republiek van die Kongo in die sin dat sonde wat die teenoorgestelde van liefde is, die dryfveer is agter die onderdrukkende strukture wat miljoene mense in die DRK en elders in die wêreld in armoede gedompel het. Daar is ook bevind dat die begrip van soteriologie in die Pinkster denominasie se teologie problematies is. Net die geestelike aspek van redding is in ag geneem en die fiesiese aspek is misken. Daar is ook diegene in die denominasie wat verkeerdlik glo in die voorspoeds evangelie waarvolgens armoede die gevolg is van die persoon se eie sonde of ontrouheid wat betref die gee van tiendes. Hulle glo dat die gee van groot hoeveelhede geld sal lei tot seëninge en voorspoed. Hierdie siening het 'n effek gehad op die denominasie se houding teenoor die uitroei van armoede. Daarom is die 30 ème CPCO se betrokkenheid by die uitwissing van armoede rudimentêr. Dit is beperk tot hulp aan die armes. . Alhoewel die 30 ème CPCO stasie van Lubumbashi as geheel sporadies hulp aan die armes verleen het, is daar baie faktore wat die kerk se vermoë om effektief te wees in die uitroei van armoede, beperk het. Een daarvan is 'n begrip van die grondoorsaak van armoede. Die begrip word beïnvloed deur die persepsie van armoede, en aspekte soos die mentaliteit van die mense, die graad van gelettertheid, die omgewing, die siening van die wêreld, die kultuur ens. Die onvermoë van die 30 ème CPCO om armoede aan te spreek is die gevolg van 'n gebrek aan opvoeding, swak administrasie, finansiële probleme en gebrek aan vennote, asook 'n gebrek aan samewerking tussen gemeentes.

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The Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria has not failed the nation in this regard. At the annual Easter and December retreats of the Deeper Life Bible Church, the participants are given "free food and lodging". Some years later, "free transport was also added"¹⁸. In other words, every Christian should not experience sickness, poverty, unemployment and other human problems. The question is: Is this the position of Jesus teaching on prosperity? An aspect of the major contribution of the Church in general is the development of Western education. The Pentecostal Churches are not found wanting in this regard. In fact, many of the leaders and founders of such Churches are elite and well educated. So, their interest in education is of great importance. Poverty is widespread and unchecked across the 26 provinces of

the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Despite being the second-largest country in Africa, with an approximate area of 2.3 million square kilometres (890,000 sq mi), and being endowed with rich natural resources, the DRC is the second-poorest country in the world. The average annual income is only \$785 US dollars. In 2016, the United Nations (UN) Human Development Index (HDI) ranked the DRC as the 176th least-developed country out of United Pentecostal Church International, UPCI, Holiness Pentecostals, religious sect, personal story, complaints. He also used church funds to satisfy his own pleasures. In the church I lived within a strict framework--then suddenly I had no absolutes, felt totally lost and very afraid. This, and the consequences of having married another member led to chronic depression and divorce. Another ex-member recently contacted me and said she continually has nightmares about committing some unforgivable and unpardonable sin while in the group. "I am a 30-year-old man--who at 16 got involved with the United Pentecostal Church. I had a spiritual experience and wanted to be around spirit-filled Christians, so I simply got out the phone book and looked under Pentecost.