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Pentecostalism and Corporate Social Responsibility: A Study of the Redeemed Christian Church of God

Babatunde Adewale
University of Lagos

Abstract

Pentecostalism is an aspect of Christianity that places special emphasis on baptism of the Holy Spirit and personal experience of salvation. Until recently, its adherents were pre-occupied with church growth and gospel of materialism. Little attention was devoted to Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR). This constitutes a problem because it does not conform to the teachings of the Bible. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to investigate the role of Pentecostal churches in Corporate Social Responsibility using the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) as a reference point. The objectives are to examine her socio-economic activities, community development programmes, and women empowerment schemes. The study utilized primary and secondary sources of information using the analytical method of interpretation. It draws on the insight of Weber's theory on the spirit of capitalism and Durkheim's sociology and functionalism of religions in analyzing the Movement's capitalist tendencies as a force in community development. The study established that RCCG is aggressively involved in Corporate Social Responsibility with activities such as community health care, education, construction of roads, housing,

Babatunde Adewale Adeniyi, PhD.
Department of History and Strategic Studies
University of Lagos, Akoka-Yaba, Lagos Nigeria
Phone: +234 803 344 6890; Email: batundeade544@gmail.com

digging of bore-holes, computer training, and rehabilitation programmes. It recommends that the church should maintain a balance between spiritual and circular activities.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, Capitalism, Corporate Social Responsibility, Community-development, Materialism

Introduction

The relationship between religion and development continues to attract scholarly attention across the globe (Musoni 2013: 75). This becomes pertinent because of the role religion is playing in community and Corporate Social Responsibility, particularly in Africa. The poverty and underdevelopment of African society gave the impetus to religious organizations like the Pentecostal movements to become active in developmental projects (Fredrick 2017: 160). For development to be meaningful, it has to be sustainable with vital institutions entrenched in the society (Rubogora 2017: 2). This involves understanding the human, social, economic, and religious dimensions of the people. Peace building, freedom of worship, and equitable distribution of resources are also vital to a sustainable development (Barbosa 2014: 7). Since Africans are very religious, development in Africa must focus on the religious life of the people in order to meet their fundamental needs. The involvement of Pentecostal churches in development initiatives is therefore quite instructive. The churches are not only contributing to development in Africa, they are also operating outside the continent (Adogame 2016: 406). They are taking up social welfare programmes within Africa and the Diaspora with the aim of transforming the societies. Therefore, beyond the provision of spiritual issues, they are becoming entrenched in social services, economic empowerment, and general well-being of the society. This is quite innovative and

commendable given their apathy to social services in their early state of evolution (Wilkinson 207: 75).

The facts of whether Pentecostals are involved in societal development have been established by various studies. The remaining questions that need to be addressed is how and to what extent can they aid development? (Anderson 2015). What drives their socio-economic activities? Is it profit or societal transformation? This paper attempts to provide an objective analysis which addresses the issues raised in these questions.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first examines Max Weber and Emile Durkheim's theories on the spirit of modern capitalism and sociology and functionality of religion in shaping many Pentecostal churches' activities, especially RCCG, towards capitalist instincts and a force of social change. The second explores the emergence of Pentecostalism and RCCG in Nigeria. The third section considers the socio-economic initiatives of RCCG and their impact on community and national development. Section four considers the role of women in Pentecostalism while section five is the conclusion of the study.

Theoretical Framework

The study employed two theories: Max Weber's Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism; and Emile Durkheim's Functionalism and Sociology of Religion. Max Weber's theory was propounded in 1904 in Germany to study the relationship between the ethics of ascetic Protestantism and the emergence of the spirit of modern capitalism. According to Weber,

Religious philosophy of the Calvinists which lay emphasis on 'this worldly' rather than 'the other worldly', hard work, aggressive savings, asceticism, 'predestination' (which asserts that success in business is a proof of salvation) and

re-investment in business helped significantly
in creating the modern spirit of capitalism.
(Weber 2005: xi).

This theory is quite relevant to the study because of the propensity of a good number of Pentecostal churches to display affluence in the public. Also, many Pentecostal churches promote teachings on prosperity and materialism. As a matter of fact, RCCG and a host of other Pentecostal churches could be described as capitalist firms operating with major indices of capitalism. These include free and unlimited ownership of property, accumulation and concentration of capital, wage labour, and business competition, among other capitalist instincts. Redemption Camp of RCCG is a reference point of the church capitalist nature. The camp has 5,000 houses, multiple road networks, a police station, private refuse disposal unit, banks, a post office, and a 25 megawatt plant with gas piped into the camp from Nigeria's capital city (Maclean 2017). Other facilities in the camp are health centers with maternity unit, mechanic workshop, lock-up shops, aerodrome and a funfair with a Ferris wheel for children's relaxation (Olubi 2017). With over 14,000 parishes in Nigeria, resort space in the Redemption camp and perhaps the largest single landowner in Nigeria, the church could be described as a business empire (Marshal 2013). Buttressing the rising power of RCCG and her capitalist instincts, Ruth Marshall writes:

Their headquarters - Redemption City boasts a space called Holy Ghost Arena that holds one million worshippers! Now there is a push for expansion in North America, an interesting example of reverse mission. RCCG is so connected to the global network that they have modern day money changers set up outside the

churches ready to exchange currencies as people prepare their offerings.

(Marshal 2013: 1)

On the nexus between Pentecostalism, power and capitalist ideas, Ruth Marshal also says:

The Pentecostal movement is hungry for expansion, both the number of souls redeemed and the physical space acquired, so that the space becomes a spectacularized testimonial to their power rather than a local dwelling of community. What emerged was a fitting parallel to the late capitalist ethic in which the creation and capture of more means is the highest ideal.

(Marshal 2013: 1)

A major flaw of Weberian theory on modern capitalism is its failure to recognize that Florentines were able to build a capitalist empire in the fifteenth century without any Protestant influence (Reinert & Fredona 2017: 9). Other factors such as state regulation on trade, scientific discoveries of eighteenth century, and population explosion also contributed to the emergence of modern capitalism.

The second theory of sociology and functionalism of religion was propounded by Emile Durkheim in France in 1912. The theory was used to examine the functionality of religion in society's cohesion and stability of a primitive society of Australian Aborigines. The theory assumes that:

Religion is eminently social, providing social control, cohesion and purpose for people as

well as other means of communication and gathering to interact in any given society Religion is seen as a conservative force that helps to create social order and societal stability. Thus, religion functions to bind society's members by prompting them to affirm their common values and beliefs on a regular basis.

(Pickering 1975: 120)

This relevance of the theory's philosophy to our study is found in the sense of 'unity' among Pentecostal churches occasioned by their universal belief in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This explains why they call themselves 'sisters and brothers', which depicts a sense of unity within the Movement. Apart from this, adherents of Pentecostalism are also becoming functional in community and national development through their various socio-economic activities, most especially in education and rehabilitation programmes.

A major flaw of Durkheim's theory is in the fact that it views religion exclusively from a positive perspective. However, religion also serves as a force of underdevelopment when its activities are geared towards terrorism. For example, the activities of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, Al Shabab in Somalia, and Al Qaeda in the Middle East are geared towards societal destabilization. No wonder, Agbibo (2013: 65) argues that the religious activities of the Boko Haram sect have caused more harm than the Nigerian civil war of 1967 to 1970.

Brief History of RCCG and Doctrinal Narratives

The origin of Pentecostalism in Nigeria could be traced back to the early twentieth century and measured in terms of three phases of development namely; 1930s-1960s, 1970s-1980s; and 1990s

till date (Adeboye 2004: 138). According to her, the first phase of 1930s-1960s was characterized by a close interaction between the indigenous *Aladura* churches and foreign denominations. This interaction produced the first set of indigenous Pentecostal churches like Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) and RCCG. The *Aladura* churches phenomenon could be traced to the activities of Garrick Sokari Braide and his Christ Army Church in Delta coastal areas between 1912 and 1918 (Ojo 2006: 9). RCCG evolved from an *Aladura* church known as Cherubim and Seraphim in 1952 in Lagos, Nigeria (RCCG Workers in Training 2011: 7). The founder, Rev. Josiah Akindayomi had his background at the Eternal Sacred Order of Cherubim & Seraphim, where he rose to become an ‘Apostle’ and ‘Prophet’ (RCCG @50:11). Under him, the Church was preoccupied with evangelism, prayer and holiness. However, the coming of Pastor E. A. Adeboye as leader in 1981 changed the philosophy of the church. Under him, RCCG started pursuing aggressive evangelism, socio-economic activities in education, modern healthcare services, media, marketing, real estate, and rehabilitation initiatives.

As a result of doctrinal differences between Rev. Josiah Akindayomi and the leaders of Cherubim and Seraphim, he was excommunicated from the group in 1952 (Ukah 2005: 171). He then transformed a group he had earlier formed in 1947 known as *Egbe Ogo Oluwa* (Glory of God Fellowship) into what is now known as RCCG. Before his demise in 1980, Rev. Josiah Akindayomi unilaterally nominated Pastor E. A. Adeboye as the next leader of the church (Ukah 2008: 171). Pastor E. A. Adeboye took over the leadership of the church in January 1981, at 39 years of age, with just 39 Parishes (RCCG Baptismal Revised Edition 2011: 2.). The church under his leadership has passed through series of transformations. As at 2015, RCCG had over 20,000 Parishes globally (RCCG Baptismal Manual 2011: 2).

On doctrinal issues and theological orientation, Pentecostal churches generally anchor their theological orientation on the scripture, community of believers, and the power of the Holy Spirit (Cartledge 2008: 94). Adeboye 2004: 138) argues that Pentecostal doctrines are usually presented in the context of personal salvation, baptism of the Holy Spirit and warfare against evil spirits. This experience is expected to bring about a transformation in the life of the convert from being a 'sinful' person to a 'born again' individual. In the same vein, healing and persistent warfare against evil forces are also part of the core of Pentecostal doctrines (Anderson 2005: 69). Kenny 2010: 75) however argues that prophesy is the most important doctrinal feature that separates Pentecostals from other Christian denominations. Though Pentecostals have unwavering believe in the authority of the Bible, emphasis on prophetic utterances is highly valued and respected. On his part, Ukachi (2013) argues that salvation experience produced by Holy Spirit baptism with the manifestation of *glossolalia* or what is known as 'speaking in tongues' is at the core of Pentecostal doctrinal experience (Ukachi 2013: 21).

While the RCCG basic doctrine is anchored on the authority of the Bible, Holy Spirit baptism and Pastor E. A. Adeboye's teachings (RCCG@50 2003:32), personal experience of salvation popularly known as being 'born again' in Nigeria, water baptism by immersion, Holy Spirit baptism with initial evidence of 'speaking in tongues', and obedience to spiritual leaders constitute the bulk of RCCG doctrinal orientation (Ukah 2008:171). Pastor E. A. Adeboye is highly revered and respected by his followers. As a result, his teachings, orders, and sermons are used by the followers as the doctrine of the church. For example, in one of his sermons, Pastor E. A. Adeboye taught his members that God will handle the escalating cost of *garri*, a cassava-based staple diet in Nigeria (Gaiya 2015:166). The

implication of this teaching is the fact that RCCG members have been taught to rely on God for their needs and not on government. Therefore, it is unlikely for RCCG members to join any anti-government rally because of escalating prices of food stuff in the country. A popular phrase in RCCG is “Daddy G.O. says”. Whatever Pastor E. A. Adeboye says is regarded as doctrine in the church.

In support of the doctrinal orientation of RCCG, Ojo (2006:217) argues that the religious thought of Pentecostalism does not center on theological controversies but on the practical aspects of Christian beliefs that relate to daily living. Therefore, religious practices are as significant as statement on doctrinal beliefs. He notes that beliefs among the Pentecostals are important because they are strictly a reflection of the socio-economic conditions of the society. Hence, the teachings constitute life forces that sustain the vitality of the movement. For instance, Pastor E. A. Adeboye introduced gospel of prosperity when he came on board to change the financial situation of the church he inherited from the founder (Ukah 2008:177). According to Pastor E. A. Adeboye, the church he met could hardly fulfill her financial obligations. Therefore, gospel of prosperity was aggressively taught in the early 1980s and 1990s to change the ‘poor’ financial condition of the church (Ukah 2008: 177). As a result of this, teachings on giving are quite popular in RCCG and among followers of the influential Pastor till date (RCCG @50: 31).

Socio-Economic Empowerment Programmes

A good number of Pentecostals have started civic engagements aimed at societal transformation. These activities are motivated by the inability of many African states to provide basic social services for their people (Burgess 2017). Poverty and crime rates are reducing through their activities in education, healthcare,

housing and rehabilitation initiatives. It is important to stress that a lot of Africans are turning to these Pentecostal churches for spiritual help because of their socio-economic challenges. As a result, there is aggressive competition to win converts such that each denomination seeks to keep her members away jealously from other Pentecostal churches. (Dairo 2010: 195).

A major popular theme among Pentecostal churches in Nigeria is the issue of nation building and development (Burgess 2014). Among the leading Pentecostal organisations with development initiatives are Victor Anigbogu's Institute for National Transformation, which trains people on the importance of integrity in leadership positions; Pastor Sam Adeyemi's Daystar Christian Centre which focuses also on leadership transformation; and Pastor Wale Adefarasin's Guiding Light Assembly, which focuses on street urchin's rehabilitation and transformation (Burgess 2014).

Maxwell (2005) argues that the ascetic lifestyles of many Pentecostal adherents bring about positive transformations in their lives (Maxwell 2005: 15). The teachings on ascetic life styles ensures regular savings, united family, active church participation, shunning of alcoholism, illicit drugs, prostitution, and a better managed economy. Therefore, living according to the teachings on moral life brings about a life that can easily be self-controlled. This could bring about the capacity to redeem, restore, and re-shape the family to overcome the challenges associated with the destructive effects of neo-liberalism and corruption.

Another feature of socio-economic empowerment of Pentecostalism is the practice of reconstructing hitherto a forest area into religious camps (Maxwell 2005: 15). Such camps provide schools, banks, hospitals, housing facilities, and auditoriums for members and non- members. The camps which are fast becoming alternative cities are empowering people through job creations, housing schemes, business opportunities,

etc. They are becoming spiritual havens where people seek for spiritual solutions to their diverse socio-economic problems.

Under the leadership of the founder, Rev. Josiah Akindayomi, RCCG devoted little attention to the socio-economic empowerment of members. For example, only one maternity clinic was built at RCCG National Headquarters at Ebute-Metta in 1962. However, the coming of Pastor E. A. Adeboye in 1981 changed this narrative (Hunt 2002: 185). Today, the church has a number of different socio-economic empowerment schemes for members. It has gone into several business ventures, generating revenue and creating employment opportunities for members. For instance, Pastor E. A. Adeboye established the Jubilee Development Foundation and Jubilee Cooperative Society in 2002 for members (Ukah 2008: 172). The scheme offers soft loans to 'credible' members who attend spiritual programmes of the church and return their tithe regularly to start small-scale business ventures. Similarly, RCCG members constitute the bulk of the workforce in various socio-economic ventures of the church thereby reducing the problem of unemployment within the church circles and in Nigeria, by extension.

Rehabilitation Initiatives

On rehabilitation programmes, the Redeemed Christian Church of God runs the following centres:

- Christ Against Drug Abuse Ministry (CADAM) established in 1991 for the management of drug addicts. The coordinator of the agency says: "the wife of the General Overseer Mummy G.O. provides about 60% of the annual budget of the agency from her personal fund" (Adedeji 2017). Wellspring Rehabilitation Center Apapa Family established on 16th January 1994 for drug

dependent persons. Since 2003, the center has graduated 484 service users from its recovery programmes.

- Redeemed AIDS Programme Action Committee (RAPAC) established in 1998 for AIDS/HIV infected persons and preventive measures. As a result of the large crowd coming to the Redemption Camp seeking solution to AIDS/HIV problem, Pastor E. A. Adeboye established RAPAC to address this challenge (Ukah 2008:172). On RAPAC, Ukah stresses further:

This para-church arm of the RCCG is the voice of Enoch Adebayo in 'brining succour' to people living with HIV/AIDS and desperately searching for a solution to their dreaded medical condition. Through its programme, RAPAC coordinates the church's efforts in catering for people who are living with HIV and for people who are not yet infected.

(Ukah 2008: 173)

On the activities of RAPAC, Ukah also writes:

RAPAC serves as a social service arm of the RCCG and works in concert with international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the International Red Cross (IRC), Family Health International (FHI) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Through these other organizations, the RAPAC secures funding for its activities and programmes in the church. The church, through the office of the General Overseer, provides additional funding and

administrative support for RAPACs programmes, which are often stretched because of huge demands by the public. These programmes are not limited to church members, but to anyone requesting assistance.

(Ukah 2008: 173)

Other rehabilitation agencies include Wholistic Ministry, established in 2002 for the management of sexually abused persons; and Habitation of Hope Ministry, established in 2006 for the rehabilitation of street urchins popularly called area boys and girls.

Community Empowerment and Corporate Social Responsibilities

Apart from the core spiritual function of the church, RCCG is also involved in community empowerment schemes and several socio services. These include educational provision and corporate social responsibilities. For example, RCCG operates many schools in Nigeria. The schools comprise of Crèche, Nursery, Primary, and Secondary. As at 2017, the church had about 250 of such schools (Kofo 2017). The church also owns a university, Redeemer's University (RUN). This university, which was licensed by the government in January 2005, commenced academic activities in October 2005. One of the objectives of the founding fathers was to use the university as a platform to preach the gospel to Nigerians and non-Nigerians. The university is the highest educational institution in the church and it is expected to teach both religious and non-religious courses as well as admit both members of the RCCG and non-members. In order to achieve this objective, participation in religious activities such as sessions designed by the church is made compulsory for

undergraduate students and optional for postgraduate students and members of staff (Olibamoyo 2020)

On employment generation, the university has employed 367 staff as at October 2016. This covers both academic and nonacademic staff (run.edu.ng 2017). RUN is complimenting the efforts of government in making education accessible to Nigerians. With this university and other Pentecostal universities on board, admission pressure on Nigerian universities is gradually being reduced, though the problem still persists.

Community Empowerment Schemes in Nigeria

RCCG runs several Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) in several communities in Nigeria with the belief that CSR is the heart of the gospel. The church believes that the positive impact of a Parish on the host community should be such that outsiders will cheerfully and voluntarily want to become members of the RCCG (Ogbontiba 2017: 39). CSR Activities include

- **Indoor (Church-Based)**

Free medical check-up, establishment of Daycare Centre or Crèche, digging of deep wells (beside the church), sinking of boreholes (beside the church), and empowerment programmes (e.g. skill acquisition training in the church auditorium on weekends) and organizing remedial/extra moral classes during the holidays in the church auditorium.

- **Outdoor (Community Based)**

Cleaning of drainages, prison evangelism with gifts, hospital evangelism with gifts, road repairs (e.g. filling of potholes), digging of deep wells within the community, sponsorship of people to acquire skill, e.g. computer skills and information technology), construction of toilets at public places (e.g. market), visits with gifts to the less privileged (such as orphanages, physically challenged people, schools), provision of traffic cubicle for police or traffic warden, special lecture/ministration

for Okada Riders, visits to Police Stations with moderate gifts (e.g. writing pens, tissue papers, torchlights, etc.) to aid performance, possibly with the inscription of RCCG on the gift items, and sports/Games (Ogbontiba 2017: 39)

On community empowerment activities, Saturday 17th March 2011 was indeed an emotion laden moment for the Director of Christ against Drug Abuse Ministry (CADAM) Epe, as a delegation from the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Christ Church, Lagos Province 55, went to CADAM to commission a 20kVA Generator and other gifts items. According to the church, Corporate Social Responsibility is something the church understood as part of salvation. So, in order to impact lives and make life comfortable, provision of a generating set was the first thing that crossed their mind for the well-being the people associated with the centre. For instance, the rehabilitation centre has a fish pond which could not be used due to lack of electricity supply to pump water. The center had bathrooms but could not use them for the same reason (Akinwande 2014: 21). Therefore, the donation of a 20KVA generator brought life to the abandoned fish pond project, thereby increasing the quality of food in the centre.

CADAM was established in 1991 with the aim of bringing back to life and normalcy all those who had derailed by their acquaintance with hard drugs. The rehabilitation centre feeds people with physical and spiritual diet, train them in various vocational skills, and reconcile most of them with their families without the participant paying a dime (Olatoye 2016: 22).

Similarly, the Redeemed Christian Church of God Milk and Honey Parish, Mende Maryland Lagos distributed welfare items and foodstuffs to more than 3,000 people during their 8th edition of the annual weekend of praise which took place in December 2011. More than 1,300 people were also given free medical tests and treatment during the 4-day event which took

place at the Zonal Headquarters 29, Sunmola Street, Mende, Lagos (Adeboye 2015: 54.).

In pursuance of the vision of the General Overseer, Pastor Enoch Adeboye, the RCCG Lagos Province 37 under the leadership of Pastor Benjamin Ajayeoba has been using the platform of the CRS to impact the lives of people in the neighborhood where their Parishes are located. Among the key projects executed in the various locations are the donations of a 6.5KVA Gasoline Generating Plant, a 42-Inch LED TV set, and a 1.5 HP Split Unit Air Conditioner to the Community Health Centre. Other initiatives recently carried out by the Province include a 6-week empowerment and training programme for about 100 people. The Province carried out the project in collaboration with the Lagos State Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation. The Province also gave the Meran Primary Health Centre an all-round face lift through the supply of new mattresses, new hospital beds, shelves, and weighing scales, among other items. The Province gave the Schools a borehole with two tap channels and renovated their 24 room toilets.

On Thursday April 10, 2014, the Wholistic Outreach stormed Akobi Street, Ajegunle on a rescue mission to the 'lost' with a special interest in young girls vulnerable to prostitution. For instance, the brothels on Akobi Street have an average of over 150 girls with some of the girls in their pre-teens or early teens. Furthermore, Wholistic goes on weekly outreach to these areas (Akinwande 2014: 23). Through their weekly outreaches, many girls have denounced their membership of several prostitution cartels in the area.

The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Rivers Province 4, Port Harcourt embarked on a Corporate Social Responsibility project with a visit to Port Harcourt Remand Home, Borokiri. The Remand home which is a juvenile home was visited to support the needs of the Home by providing essential material items for

the upkeep of the inmates and to commence the special programme code named “Redeemed Life” (Akinwande 2014: 21). “Redeemed Life” is an in-house counseling monitoring and post rehabilitation programme designed by the CSR board of the province for inmates of the Remand Home. The aim is to give selected inmates counseling with God’s word, training and support so as to empower them to become self-reliant after their release. The visitation to the Remand Home was the first phase of programme. Items presented included mattresses (12 pieces), bed sheets (12 pieces), pillow cases (6 pieces), disinfectants, toiletries, soaps, mop sticks, beverages, and food items (bag of rice and cartons of Noodles) (Akinwande 2014: 21).

As part of the 2016 Easter Let’s go a-fishing programme, the RCCG Lagos Province 40 organized a medical outreach for the residents of Alagbole, Akute, and Ojodu communities. The programme which took place on March 25, 2016, was well attended (Olatoye 2016: 22). The medical outreach was part of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative of the province aimed at complementing the efforts of the government in health care delivery. People with health challenges were directed to the medical team for consultations (Brown 2011: 54). The Redeemed Christian Church of God, the Lord’s Chapel Gbagada on November 16th, 2014 donated a street light to church street residents in Gbagada, Lagos State, as part of the church’s Corporate Social Responsibility. Before the donation of the street light, the area was notorious for criminal activities at night. The area has been transformed with mounting of the street lights (Oyetero 2014: 67).

All these are illustrations of the desire of RCCG to empower various communities across Nigeria. Their activities include donation of street lights, construction of public toilets, training programmes, rehabilitation of drug addicts, and visitation to Juvenile homes.

Women Empowerment Schemes

The modern Pentecostal Movement at its inception in the early twentieth century was blessed with the ministry of women in key leadership positions. Over the time, this leadership roles the play declined progressively (Langford 2017: 69). It is noteworthy to mention that women are gradually re-claiming their leadership roles in many Pentecostal churches these days. The churches are teaching women particularly those in the middle-class cadre to achieving social mobility and empowerment opportunities (Eriksen 2014: 262). Unlike the other churches where women are not quite visible in leadership positions, Olademo (2010) argues that Pentecostalism offers more visibility to women in taking up leadership roles (Olademo 2010: 161). Women are given the opportunity to lead the choir, prayer meetings, House Fellowship, children ministry, and Bible study. Similarly, women are given a wide range of opportunities to exhibit their leadership qualities without overt restrictions like in the African Instituted Churches (AIC) (Mwaura 2007: 359).

Pentecostalism offers women the opportunity to be ordained as ministers (Sande 2016: 57). This is in contrast to their former position in which ordination is only meant for men. However, despite this uplifting of women to leadership positions, men still dominate decision making organs of several Pentecostal churches; even within the Nigerian Pentecostal movement, women leadership is still a controversial issue (Fatokun 2006: 1). While neo-Pentecostal churches are giving women the needed opportunities to take up leadership roles, the classical Pentecostal churches are reluctant about women leadership.

Despite the widespread belief within Christianity that Pentecostalism offers more empowerment to women in leadership roles, patriarchal tendencies are still visible within the Pentecostal movement (Adeogun 2015). A cursory look at the leadership configuration of the Pentecostal movement reveals

male dominated hierarchy. For instance, a church like Foursquare Gospel Mission which was founded by a woman (Aimee Semple, McPherson) in 1922 is yet to produce a woman as General Overseer.

During the era of Rev. Josiah Akindayomi, the founder of RCCG, women were not elevated to any post by ordination. There were no women pastors or heads of para-church groups. Josiah believed that a woman should do the house work. This belief conditioned his attitude towards women and leadership positions (Ukah 2008: 164). However, the coming of Pastor E. A. Adeboye as the leader of the church changed the fortune of women in RCCG. Women are being elevated to serve as Deaconess, Assistant pastor, and even full pastor. Pastor E. A. Adeboye relies on Bible account in Galatians 3:28 which says: “There is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Ukah 2008: 164). Pastor E. A. Adeboye created an office for the wife of the General Overseer known as the Mother in Israel. This office is perhaps the most powerful after the office of the General Overseer. Ukah has this to say about the office of the Mother in Israel:

Mother in Israel coordinates the wives of principal officers of the church, notably the wives of the Assistant General Overseers, Provincial, Area and Parish pastors down to the grassroots level. In addition to working to bring up the female members of the church, the Mother-in-Israel functions as the coordinator of the Directorate of Teens and Children’s education.

(Ukah 2008: 167)

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is quite instructive that RCCG manifests capitalist instincts of capital accumulation and aggressive investments. This is quite evident in her activities in numerous business ventures with the attendant profit accumulation. Interestingly, this has promoted entrepreneurship and economic prosperity within the church (Fantini 2016: 67). In fact, it is being argued in some quarters that the church has metamorphosed into a capitalist firm with a spiritual garment as her umbrella. Therefore, the Weberian theory of capitalism is quite apt with the activities of RCCG. Nevertheless, the church is also becoming highly functional in the societal cohesion, stability and transformation through her socio-economic activities. This manifests through her job creation, rehabilitation programmes, and urbanization through camp infrastructural activities. The continuous infrastructural development at the Redemption Camp is an indication that public infrastructure could also be upgraded on regular basis by government at all levels (Haynes 2014: 19). Therefore, Durkheim's theory of sociology and functionalism of religion is quite relevant with the activities of RCCG. The socio-economic activities have fostered a close social and spiritual bond between the church and several host communities (Bueno 2001: 188).

It is recommended that RCCG should be mindful of her primary responsibility of evangelism. If not, the church could be eclipsed easily with her several socio-economic activities. Therefore, it becomes expedient that a balance should be achieved between core evangelism and socio-economic activities. There is need for more capital to be channeled from the national headquarters to the Parishes in order to reduce the problem of financial burden on members. Similarly, educational fees should be looked into with a view to reducing it in order for more members to benefit from the church educational initiatives.

Regular collaboration is needed between the church and the government most especially in education and rehabilitation programmes. Such collaboration has the tendencies to improve the stability and transformation of the society through the church and state phenomenon. The church should endeavour to improve the welfare of Parish pastors and members by reducing the fund being mobilized from the Parishes to the National Headquarters. This will reduce the frequent financial task on members in form of donations, pledges, and other developmental levies for church developmental programmes. Lastly, RCCG leadership should endeavour to reduce the vehicular gridlock along Mowe-Ibafo expressway during their monthly Holy Ghost service. This gridlock causes enormous socio-economic dislocations to commuters on monthly basis. Collaborating with relevant government agencies on how to permanently solve the gridlock problem would reduce hardship and challenges associated with vehicular movement in the area.

Notes

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