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Church Culture and Proliferation of Pentecostal Assemblies of God Church in Hamisi Sub-County in Vihiga County, Kenya

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Abstract: *The call to the church—to all Christians—is to rediscover the cultural mandate, embracing the opportunity to influence culture through evangelism and transformation to Christendom. In the church, we must teach about calling and cultural influence and provide vital support to cultural leaders. We must become an integral piece of the local culture, convening and encouraging creation of future culture that serves the common good. From the foregoing, the study aimed at assessing the influence of church culture on proliferation of Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) church in Hamisi sub county in Vihiga County Kenya. The target population were pastors, church leaders and parishioners within the PAG circle only and should be aged between 18 and above. Questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect data.*

Keywords: PAG doctrines, church culture, salvation teachings, proliferation.

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INTRODUCTION

Over 100 years, Pentecostal Christianity, and its Charismatic and Neo-Pentecostal variants, has won over half a billion souls worldwide (Freeman 2012; David Barrett 2001), representing almost 28 per cent of organized global Christianity (Barrett & Johnson 2002), and constituting what David Martin (2002) has called the 'largest global market place' in recent years. It has further been suggested that these movements are also some of the most dynamic and potentially transformative religious movements in the twenty-first century (Anderson *et al.*, 2010). By far and as already indicated, the majority, comprising roughly about two-thirds of these new Pentecostal and Charismatic converts are found in the Global South, as do most of the nine million who convert to it annually (Barrett & Johnson 2002).

In 1912, the first Pentecostal missionary arrives from Finland. In the same year, a charismatic movement known as Roho ("Spirit") emerges in the Anglican Church. In 1918, North Americans establish a mission that later affiliates with the Pentecostal Assemblies of God. The churches resulting from this mission become independent in 1965 and are renamed the Pentecostal Assemblies of God. By 2002, East Africa is home to some 5,000 of these churches (Anderson 2004; Garrard 2012). From humble beginnings as an early twentieth century revivalist movement in North America, Pentecostalism has spread across the globe to become what is now broadly believed to be the fastest growing

Christian movement in the world today. That's why the researcher has investigated on doctrinal influence on the proliferation of the (PAG) Church specifically in Vihiga county Kenya. The gap is that no researcher has gone to the extent of deepening on reasons to why this organization is among the first growing movement globally.

According to a study conducted by (Mbiti, 2014) to NCCCK, the examination demonstrated that, the youthful and unpracticed pastors were more defenseless against burnout disorder than the old, experienced and concentrated restorative pastoral ministry. These discoveries were like those found among 580 pastors in America where more youthful pastors were seen as increasingly defenseless to spiritual burnout disorder. This again brought a solid relationship that was noted in a similar report between spiritual burnout disorder and the craving to resign from evangelism early. Burnout results from aggregate impacts of worry in evangelism condition and along these lines can harass each parishioner. However, vulnerability to the development of spiritual burnout is especially high in helping pastoral ministry grow in PAG and specifically meeting the professionals with the gospel of Jesus Christ. For instance, an earlier study by Kokonya and colleagues, (2014) indicated that 95% of pastors were afflicted by spiritual burnout because academic miss qualifications to meet the professionals with the gospel and a balance between the learned and the semi-illiterate was a challenge. Therefore, this creates a need to assess the

influence of church culture on proliferation of PAG church in Hamisi sub-county in Vihiga County, Kenya.

Objective

The main objective of the study was to assess the impact of church culture on the proliferation of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God in Hamisi sub-county, Vihiga county Kenya,

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Hamisi sub-county Vihiga County –Kenya. A sample of 60 churches was drawn from Hamisi sub- County to represent the total sample and other information was derived from secondary sources. Simple random sampling was employed to the selection of sample size under the descriptive research design. In order to identify the particular elements of Pentecostalism as play, the researcher used Erving Coffman’s social theory of conceptual frames to organize Pentecostal religious activity. Data collection instrument included close ended questionnaires and interview guides.

DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

Information relating to the growth trend of PAG church was obtained from the regional accounts clerk who collects and maintains various kinds of information such as financial data, number of members, and number of new churches that are established under the PAG umbrella. The researcher collected information related to revenue, members, and new establishments for five consecutive years beginning 2016 to 2020. From the data collected, the researcher has established the trend of PAG church growth over five years and analyzed it in relation to the objectives of the study.

Pearson correlation test was used to check the relationship between the variables under study. It was determined that a moderate positive relationship existed between variables, implying that these variables will tend to increase or decrease together at a linear relationship. However, this does not mean that one variable has a significant influence on the occurrence of another variable .The correlation between church culture and proliferation of PAG was positive, indicating that a significant relationship is existing. Similarly, the result has determined that for every unit increase in the church culture (CI), there is a predicted increase of 2.585 in the long odds of being at a higher level of PAG Proliferation. Therefore, there is great danger of losing sight of the Church in the endeavor to emphasize the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven or Christendom. We are prone to think it a small thing to speak of the Church; the Kingdom and Christendom seem so large in comparison.

We are tempted to distinguish and contrast Churchism, as it is sometimes called, and Christianity, to the disparagement of the former. It is well to remember that Jesus Christ positively identifies Himself with the

Church (Acts 9) and not with Christendom; He gave up His life that He might found the Church (Eph.5:25). The Apostle Paul sacrificed himself in his endeavors to build up the Church, not Christendom. He speaks of his greatest sin as consisting in persecuting the Church of God (1 Cor.15:9). The supreme business of God in this age is the gathering of the Church Health/Growth is that science which investigates the Nature, function, Planting and multiplication and Health of Christian churches as they seek specifically to effectively implement the Lord’s Great Commission to make disciples of all nation’s peoples (Matthew 28:19-20 Church.

Someday it will be complete (Eph.4:12), and then the age will have served its purpose. Church Growth is a spiritual and yet practical conviction combining the eternal principles of God’s Word with the practical insights of social and behavioral sciences." The following are the church doctrines that have contributed to the proliferation of the PAG church in Vihiga county and worldwide.

Assemblies of God are the largest Pentecostal denomination in the world and the fastest-growing denominations in the Christian faith. Because this is true, their beliefs offer a good representation of basic Pentecostal theology.

The 16 Fundamental Truths were articulated in 1916 at the 4th General Council is large part to combat unorthodox teachings entering their churches.

STATEMENT OF FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS

The Bible is our all-sufficient rule for faith and practice. This Statement of Fundamental Truths is intended simply as a basis of fellowship among us (i.e., that we all speak the same thing, 1 Corinthians 1:10; Acts 2:42). The phraseology employed in this statement is not inspired or contended for, but the truth set forth is held to be essential to a full-gospel ministry. No claim is made that it contains all biblical truth, only that it covers our need as to these fundamental doctrines.

The Scriptures Inspired

The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testament, are verbally inspired of God and are the revelation of God to man, the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct (2 Timothy 3:15- 17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:21).

The One True God

The one true God has revealed himself as the eternally self-existent “I AM,” the Creator of heaven and earth and the Redeemer of mankind. He has further revealed himself as embodying the principles of relationship and association as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10,11; Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:22).

The Adorable Godhead (Terms Defined The terms trinity and persons, as related to the godhead, while not found in the Scriptures, are words in harmony with Scripture, whereby we may convey to others our immediate understanding of the doctrine of Jesus Christ respecting the Being of God, as distinguished from “gods many and lords many.” We therefore may speak with propriety of the Lord our God, who is One Lord, as a Trinity or as one Being of three persons, and still be absolutely scriptural (examples, Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; John 14:16,17).

(Distinction and Relationship in the Godhead Christ taught a distinction of persons in the godhead which He expressed in specific terms of relationship, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but that this distinction and relationship, as to its mode is inscrutable and incomprehensible, because unexplained (Luke 1:35; 1 Corinthians 1:24; Matthew 11:25-27; 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 John 1:3,4). (c) Unity of the One Being of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit Accordingly, therefore, there is that in the Father which constitutes Him the Father and not the Son; there is that in the Son which constitutes Him the Son and not the Father; and there is that in the Holy Spirit which constitutes Him the Holy Spirit and not either the Father or the Son. Wherefore, the Father is the Begetter; the Son is the Begotten; and the Holy Spirit is the One

proceeding from the Father and the Son. Therefore, because these three persons in the godhead are in a state of unity, there is but one Lord God Almighty and His name one (John 1:18; 15:26; 17:11,21; Zechariah 14:9).

Identity and Cooperation in the Godhead

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are never identical as to person; nor confused as to relation; nor divided in respect to the godhead; nor opposed as to cooperation. The Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son as to relationship. The Son is with the Father and the Father is with the Son, as to fellowship. The Father is not from the Son, but the Son is from the Father, as to authority.

The Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son proceeding, as to nature, relationship, cooperation, and authority. Hence, no person in the godhead either exists or works separately or independently of the others (John 5:17-30,32,37; 8:17,18).

(The Title, Lord Jesus Christ The appellation Lord Jesus Christ, is a proper name. It is never applied in the New Testament either to the Father or to the Holy Spirit. It therefore belongs exclusively to the Son of God (Romans 1:1-3,7; 2 John 3).

(f) The Lord Jesus Christ, God with Us

The Lord Jesus Christ, as to His divine and eternal nature, is the proper and only Begotten of the Father, but as to His human nature, He is the proper Son

of Man. He is, therefore, acknowledged to be both God and man; who because He is God and man, is “Immanuel,” God with us (Matthew 1:23; 1 John 4:2,10,14; Revelation 1:13,17).

(g) The Title, Son of God Since the name Immanuel embraces both God and man, in the one person, our Lord Jesus Christ, it follows that the title Son of God describes His proper deity, and the title Son of Man, His proper humanity. Therefore, the title Son of God belongs to the order of eternity, and the title Son of Man to the order of time (Matthew 1:21-23; 2 John 3; 1 John 3:8; Hebrews 7:3; 1:1-13).

(h) Transgression of the Doctrine of Christ Wherefore, it is a transgression of the doctrine of Christ to say that Jesus Christ derived the title Son of God solely from the fact of the Incarnation, or because of His relation to the economy of redemption. Therefore, to deny that the Father is a real and eternal Father, and that the Son is a real and eternal Son, is a denial of the distinction and relationship in the Being of God; a denial of the Father and the Son; and a displacement of the truth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (2 John 9; John 1:1,2,14,18,29,49; 1 John 2:22,23; 4:1-5; Hebrews 12:2).

(i) Exaltation of Jesus Christ as Lord The Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, having by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, angels and principalities and powers having been made subject unto Him. And having been made both Lord and Christ, He sent the Holy Spirit that we, in the name of Jesus, might bow our knees and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father until the end, when the Son shall become subject to the Father that God may be all in all (Hebrews 1:3; 1 Peter 3:22; Acts 2:32-36; Romans 14:11; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

Equal Honor to the Father and to the Son

Wherefore, since the Father has delivered all judgment unto the Son, it is not only the express duty of all in heaven and on earth to bow the knee, but it is an unspeakable joy in the Holy Spirit to ascribe unto the Son all the attributes of deity, and to give Him all the honor and the glory contained in all the names and titles of the godhead except those which express relationship (see paragraphs b, c, and d), and thus honor the Son even as we honor the Father (John 5:22,23; 1 Peter 1:8; Revelation 5:6-14; Philippians 2:8,9; Revelation 7:9,10; 4:8-11).

The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ the Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. The Scriptures declare: a. His virgin birth (Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:31,35). b. His sinless life (Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22). c. His miracles (Acts 2:22; 10:38). d. His substitutionary work on the cross (1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21). e. His bodily resurrection from the dead (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:39; 1 Corinthians 15:4). f. His exaltation to the right hand of God (Acts 1:9,11; 2:33; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:3).

The Fall of Man Man was created good and upright; for God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." However, man by voluntary transgression fell and thereby incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God (Genesis 1:26,27; 2:17; 3:6; Romans 5:12-19).

The Salvation of Man Man's only hope of redemption is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Conditions to Salvation.

Salvation is received through repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, being justified by grace through faith, man becomes an heir of God according to the hope of eternal life (Luke 24:47; John 3:3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 2:8; Titus 2:11; 3:5-7).

The Evidences of Salvation The inward evidence of salvation is the direct witness of the Spirit (Romans 8:16). The outward evidence to all men is a life of righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24; Titus 2:12).

The Ordinances of the Churcha) Baptism in WaterThe ordinance of baptism by immersion is commanded in the Scriptures. All who repent and believe on Christ as Savior and Lord are to be baptized. Thus, they declare to the world that they have died with Christ and that they also have been raised with Him to walk in newness of life (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 10:47,48; Romans 6:4).

b.) Holy Communion The Lord's Supper, consisting of the elements—bread and the fruit of the vine—is the symbol expressing our sharing the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4); a memorial of His suffering and death (1 Corinthians 11:26); and a prophecy of His second coming (1 Corinthians 11:26); and is enjoined on all believers "till He come!"

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

All believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This was the normal experience of all in the early Christian church. With it comes the endowment of power for life and service, the bestowment of the gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31). This experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth (Acts 8:12-17; 10:44-46; 11:14-16; 15:7-9).

With the baptism in the Holy Spirit come such experiences as an overflowing fullness of the Spirit (John 7:37-39; Acts 4:8), a deepened reverence for God (Acts

2:43; Hebrews 12:28), an intensified consecration to God and dedication to His work (Acts 2:42), and a more active love for Christ, for His Word, and for the lost (Mark 16:20).

The Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The baptism of believers in the Holy Spirit is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance (Acts 2:4). The speaking in tongues in this instance is the same in essence as the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:4-10,28), but different in purpose and use.

Sanctification

Sanctification is an act of separation from that which is evil, and of dedication unto God (Romans 12:1,2; 1Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:12). Scriptures teach a life of "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). By the power of the Holy Spirit we are able to obey the command: "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15,16). Sanctification is realized in the believer by recognizing his identification with Christ in His death and resurrection, and by faith reckoning daily upon the fact of that union, and by offering every faculty continually to the dominion of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:1-11,13; 8:1,2,13; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 2:12,13; 1 Peter 1:5).

The Church and Its Mission The Church is the body of Christ, the habitation of God through the Spirit, with divine appointments for the fulfillment of her Great Commission. Each believer, born of the Spirit, is an integral part of the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven (Ephesians 1:22,23; 2:22; Hebrews 12:23).

Since God's purpose concerning man is to seek and to save that which is lost, to be worshiped by man, and to build a body of believers in the image of His Son, the priority reason-for-being of the Assemblies of God as part of the Church is:

- To be an agency of God for evangelizing the world (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16).
- To be a corporate body in which man may worship God (1 Corinthians 12:13).
- To be a channel of God's purpose to build a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 14:12).

The Assemblies of God exists expressly to give continuing emphasis to this reason-for-being in the New Testament apostolic pattern by teaching and encouraging believers to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. This experience:

- Enables them to evangelize in the power of the Spirit with accompanying supernatural signs (Mark 16:15-20; Acts 4:29-31; Hebrews 2:3,4).
- b. Adds a necessary dimension to a worshipful relationship with God (1 Corinthians 2:10-16; 1 Corinthians 12-14).

- Enables them to respond to the full working of the Holy Spirit in expression of fruit and gifts and ministries as in New Testament times for the edifying of the body of Christ (Galatians 5:22-26; 1 Corinthians 14:12; Ephesians 4:11,12; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Colossians 1:29).

The Ministry A divinely called and scripturally ordained ministry has been provided by our Lord for the threefold purpose of leading the Church in:

- Evangelization of the world (Mark 16:15-20),
- Worship of God (John 4:23,24), and
- Building a Body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son (Ephesians 4:11,16).

Divine Healing Divine healing is an integral part of the gospel. Deliverance from sickness is provided for in the Atonement, and is the privilege of all believers (Isaiah 53:4,5; Matthew 8:16,17; James 5:14-16).

The Blessed Hope The resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in Christ and their translation together with those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord is the imminent and blessed hope of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17; Romans 8:23; Titus 2:13; 1 Corinthians 15:51,52).

The Millennial Reign of Christ

The second coming of Christ includes the rapture of the saints, which is our blessed hope, followed by the visible return of Christ with His saints to reign on the earth for one thousand years (Zechariah 14:5; Matthew 24:27,30; Revelation 1:7; 19:11-14; 20:1-6). This millennial reign will bring the salvation of national Israel (Ezekiel 37:21,22; Zephaniah 3:19,20; Romans 11:26,27) and the establishment of universal peace (Isaiah 11:6-9; Psalm 72:3-8; Micah 4:3,4).

The Final Judgment There will be a final judgment in which the wicked dead will be raised and judged according to their works. Whosoever is not found written in the Book of Life, together with the devil and his angels, the beast and the false prophet, will be consigned to everlasting punishment in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:43-48; Revelation 19:20; 20:11-15; 21:8).

The New Heavens and the New Earth

“We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21,22)

CONCLUSION

The doctrinal teachings are strong as per the Biblical themes. It has strong foundation of the word. This comes by training of the pastors and leaders on the right exegetical interpretation of the text and humanistic and hermeneutical considerations. The PAG Church

doctrine has contributed passively of the growth of the church. There has been inclination of doctrines. The study established that influence of doctrine of the PAG is highly effective in Hamisi sub county, thus contributing to the spread of the church.

Recommendation

The church needs to adjust and accommodate all people groups including the learned, illiterate, and semi-illiterate. In addition, the church must try and avoid mixing unnecessary traditional cultures in the teachings of the text. Lastly, the church culture must be flexible enough to adjust to current trends in the delivery of teachings and church growth. It must assess some of the aspects of church doctrines that is weighing down ministerial delivery.

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