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Towards Pentecostal Church Indigenization Policy: The Way Forward for the Pentecostals in Northern Nigeria

(Pp. 136-149)

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Abstract

In this article, attempt has been made to examine the way in which the Deeper Life Bible church has tackled the issue of church indigenization in the north. We would examine to what extent the church has succeeded in doing so. Much of the achievement of indigenizing the church in the north has been due to the factual, commitment, wise and matured leadership of the Pastor William F. Kumuyi (the General Superintendent of Deeper Life Bible Church). The success of the beginning of the process of indigenization of the church, that is Deeper Life Bible Church in north shows that with patience, tact and time, what seems to have been a failure or seemingly impossible/not achievable could be made real and realistic. The article examines some methods that have been applied by others over the years that made the indigenization to be a reality even though they may not be perfect, yet they are workable and easy to adopt.

Translation of the Bible and Christian literatures into indigenous languages

The article seeks to investigate the way missionaries and older Christian churches and ministries have followed by making the numerous books published by her founder available in indigenous languages: Rev. William F. Kumuyi not available in Hausa language which is the 'Lingua franca' of the

north, but if they could be translated into the languages in the north, the people will be more receptive and respond positively to the gospel and be grafted in the local church.

According to Ruth Tucker:

Although Bible translation, like Missionary Medicine, can be viewed properly as a twentieth-century foreign missions specialization, it has its roots early in the history of the Christian church. As the gospel spread through the Mediterranean world and beyond... translation appeared in most of the major European languages ... it has the modern missionary movement that changed the entire complexion of Bible translation work.

In fact, Rev. William Cameron Townsend (Uncle Cam) founder of the Wycliffe Bible Translation and Summer Institute of Linguistics (SNL) saw the importance of Bible translation into indigenous languages of the Cakchiquel Indians of Central America whom he had earlier gone to sell Bibles to, but he soon discovered that much of his efforts were wasted and ended badly. His overriding motive was to learn their language proficiently, reduce it to written form, and finally and most importantly to make a scriptural translation. Without prior linguistic training, Uncle Cam immediately faced tremendous obstacles he began to dig into the Cakchiquel languages. In 1929, after only years of arduous toil, Uncle Cam's mind turned to the need for making translation work available in people's indigenous languages (pp. 249 – 252).

It is believed that there are over 3,000 (three thousand) languages in the world today that do not have Bibles translated into them and the Deeper Life Bible Church could send some of their missionaries to work with the Nigeria Bible Translation Trust (NBTT) in order to help make scriptures available in these languages for effective spread of the gospel.

Or as Tucker has wisely stated concerning the American Missionary to India, Rev. William Carey:

Carey was ahead of his time in missionary methodology. He had an awesome respect for the Indian culture, and he never tried to import Western substitutes, as so many missionaries who came after him would do. His goal was to build an indigenous church by means of native preachers' and by providing the Scriptures in the native tongue. And it was to that end that he dedicated his life (260).

The Nigeria Bible Translation Trust, manned mainly by Nigeria staff is continuing the work of Bible translation in Nigeria. As at 1985, statistics indicated that the complete Bible has been translated into ten Nigerian languages. The New Testament alone is in twenty-six languages, with portion of the Bible translated into thirty other languages, leaving a total of about three hundred and thirty-four (334) Nigerian languages without any portion of the Bible. The Bible Society (Western Zone) is planning to set up a Bible Printing Press in Nigeria, following the scarcity of copies of the Bible in Nigeria. For example, Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) church is working on the translation of the Kanuri language in Borno State. The Living Bible International is not relenting in making sure that the scriptures are available in Nigeria languages.

Finally, a quote from a monthly bulletin will drive home this issue of Bible Translation into our indigenous Nigerian languages especially in the case of the ones that fall into our project.

Just as a new year marks a translation from the old, new methods of translation speed the spread of God's word to unwritten languages. One new strategy is to empower nationals (natives) by providing them with needed training and resources to translate the Bible for their people. Eager and committed, nationals in a growing number of countries are catching the vision of Bible translation and running with it (p. 56).

Radio, television and gospel recordings

Experts have it that the world population is between 6.2 to 7 billion living on the face of the planet Earth compared to the 250 million that they estimated in the time of Jesus Christ in the first century. There is no doubt this great population explosion calls for more challenges of churches to strategize in

order to reach this multitude and a good method is through the use of mass media. In Northern Nigeria today, some of the languages are now used in news casting for disseminating information to people.

Deeper Life Bible Church in her zeal to reach the indigenes of northern Nigeria, could as well buy time with the Radio stations even though its expensive and transmit the gospel to the various ethnic groups. According to Tucker:

It was not after commercial broadcasting began on a wide scale in 1920's that farsighted Christians jumped at the opportunity to use this new media for spreading the gospel ... And as these Christian broadcasters broke new grounds in America, still other farsighted Christian began to dream of what impact of radio could be in the Foreign mission field... It has given traditional missionary effort a tremendous weapon and means to spread the gospel (p. 8).

We can use that some places are difficult to spread the gospel such as: Yemen, Qatar, Saudi-Arabia, Libya, Iraq, Iran, etc, because of the presence of Islam and these nation have Over 95% of them as Moslems, it is forbidden that anybody should convert another into his religion other than Islam and the consequences is death penalty for anybody who goes contrary to this law. There are other places were culture, tradition, or a particular denomination is dominating the entire nation (such as Latin America where Roman Catholicism is dominating other churches in most of the nations), or a particular political system such as the Communist would all do forbid the gospel spread among their people entirely or that of communism that has no room for any form of religion. Radio has been found to penetrate all this barriers. For according to Ruth Tucker:

Until recently, in many parts of Latin America, missionaries had a very difficult time getting people to talk with them about the gospel these same people, however, have been willing to listen in the privacy of their home through the radio broadcast (p. 9).

Radio indeed has been an instrument of strengthening the local churches especially as doctrines and other Bible teachings are prepared by the staff of the Far East Broadcasting Corporation (FEBC) to reach new converts in

China where the restriction to every form of religious activities is still very high. Tucker said:

The value of missionary radio, however, goes far beyond paying the way for personal evangelism. Radio has expanded the scope and potentials of traditional endeavours ... it goes where missionaries cannot and reaches people otherwise might not respond to more conventional approaches. Radio also has been used effectively to strengthen the local church on the mission field ..ELWA, owned and operated by Sudan Interior Mission, also broadcast programs geared primarily to Christians, not only in Liberia where the station is located, but also to surrounding African countries (p. 25).

As great as these great breakthroughs have been, there are so many people who do not understand the lingua franca of the north (Hausa language), hence the Deeper Life Bible Church can employ people from the north to translate the cassettes, videos of Rev. William F. Kumuyi in order that they will be available in these tongues for effective indigenous evangelism.

Finally, Tucker has this piece of advice for Deeper Life in her zeal to teach the indigenes of Northern Nigeria.

Today with the increasing size of transmitters and the great affordability of transistor radios, Christian broadcasts are reaching more people than ever... But as all-encompassing at it is, Radio fails to reach members of the world's population whose language or dialect represents too small a number of people to make radio practical. To fill that void, records have become an important part of audio evangelism taking the gospel to remote tribes whose language in many cases is yet unwritten. Gospel Recordings, more than any other mission, has spanned the world over with this type of mechanized ministry (p. 10).

Theological training

What God said to Israel's new commander-in-chief, Joshua at that moment clearly reveal his perception of priorities. Do not let this book of the Law depart from your mouth Then you will be prosperous and successful

(Joshua 1:8 (Living Bible). The success of their mission and prosperity in their society, the Lord said, would be assured as the leader reflected on God's Word, obeyed it and taught it for the people to follow.

Generation later, at another equally critical turning point in Israel's history, it is recorded that the new leader Ezra was successful because he followed the same pattern that God had given to Joshua. 'The good hand of his God was on him.' For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.

When Jesus gave His disciples the great Commission, He too placed high priority on teaching His Words. God and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matt. 28:20 Living Bible). Later, as the number of the disciples began to grow in Jerusalem and a crisis emerged because inadequate staffing, Peter and his colleagues wisely urged the assembly to choose suitable qualified administrators so that the apostles could keep their priority of prayer and the ministry of the word.' Luke summarizes the outcome of that critical decision: so the Word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly. V. 7.

In the early church it was not only member that grow but the Word of God also spread in hearts and homes.

Training qualified teachers of the Word in the Deeper Life Bible Church is very crucial. What a profound impact Barnabas and Saul's year of systematic teaching had in the Christian leaders in Antioch and on their community! The truth of the Word was so integrated with the daily lives that the people acknowledged that 'little Christ' (Christians) were about in town.

Lay leadership training should be carried on in many Deeper Life Bible Church assemblies. The question of pastoral training should be addressed also and not neglected. Young Timothy's should be given personal teaching and training by Veteran and experienced ministers in the Lord's service. The provision of basic text and reference books would be helpful and indispensable.

The Deeper Life Bible Church leadership should really work hard to achieve a balance in the nurture of vital spirituality, genuine scholarship and effective service for God.

But cases where the indigenous leader has had formed and secular training and academic exposure and he or she is not able to go to any theological seminary, they could be encouraged to take up home studies with the International Correspondence Institute (ICI) conducted by the Assemblies of God Church through uncountable number of Christian leaders has had certificate, diplomas and degrees in Biblical studies without going to sit down in a school and their programs are internationally acclaimed to be qualitative and standard.

Also, the Deeper Life can encourage some of their leaders to enrol with the Department of Religious Studies, University of Jos. For the Diploma program in religious studies run by Rev. Dr. Danny McCain by giving them financial support and if possible scholarships or study leave with full pay in the degree level.

Dr. Tucker has this word of advice for Deeper Life leadership in their bid to carry out effectively indigenous church program:

One of the factors that has aided national leadership and participation in church ministries has been expanded Christian education. The training of national (native) pastors) and evangelists has been revolutionized in recent years through the introduction of TEE (Theological Education by Extension). Many nationals, especially married men with families were already leaders in the local church, who had been unable to enroll in Bible schools or seminaries because of the cost and the distance from their village. But through Theological Education by Extension, by the middle of the 1970s some fifty thousand men and women in more than seventy countries were receiving advanced Bible training to more effectively serve in their communities (p. 11).

Finally, there is no doubt that many times looking at so many professed theologians and seminarians standing behind the pulpits of many churches, the tendency would be for one not to encourage anyone to go into Bible Schools. But the truth is that we have many evangelical, conservative and Bible-believing seminaries that can be of help to anyone. And so, Deeper life leadership may benefit from the counsel of Rev. Geoff Thomas in the choice of the people going into seminaries:

The choice of the right theological college to prepare for the ministry of the gospel is an important matter. It can contribute a lot to one's readiness for lifetime of Christian service. Of course, the greatest contribution to usefulness comes from a man's own Christian life. His vitality, energy, initiative, creativity, common sense, intellectual capacity, theological understanding, mood and, above all, his walk with God. Then there are also those moulding influences which come from the preaching he bears week by week, and other ministers he can listen to occasionally, or that he hears on cassettes or in books. But a sustained period of theological training is crucial. Church history, systematic theology, the original languages with the Hebrew and the Greek and principles of Exegesis of the text of Scripture, the defense of the faith and practical theology – all these taught over a few years by godly teachers in the company of other young men with this sense of calling – this can be of lasting benefit. The absence of any training will produce a pervasive feeling loss, and a niggling worry that one's preparation has not been as adequate as it might have been (p. 12).

Financial assistance

Special bank account could be opened with the sole purpose of helping the indigenous churches for buildings and gospel gadgets. For example, tape recorders, microphones, amplifiers, etc, could be procured for them in order to make the gospel reach all and sundry.

Farmers should be helped by procuring of fertilizers in large quantities for them as the bulk of the people that make up the indigenes of the Mangu Region are rural dwellers and they literally depend on farming for survival.

A close study showed that in some places within Mangu Region, mobility is a great problem for some of the pastors of the Deeper Life Bible Church and the leadership could help by procuring bicycles, lady's machines and if possible vehicles such as Jeeps, Land-rovers etc, it will make the work of rural evangelization easier and many people will receive the gospel.

Also, helping the indigenes to procure improved seedlings and improved agricultural implements will go a long way to encourage them as many still result into the crude implements as the way of farming.

It is significant to note that some specific mission – supportive ministries are developing in Nigeria. For example, the Gospel Bankers is a ministry of help specifically to provide financial and prayer support for cross-cultural missionaries. Already they are supporting a number of missionaries in the field, notable the team that is reaching out to the villages of the Koma Hills in Adamawa State.

Finances have also hindered the work of God to a large extent. This has been the problem from the beginning. Those who have the right vision lack the funds to carry it out. Those who have enough funds either waste them in superfluous projects or spent them on evangelistic programmes that are not aimed at the unreached peoples. And lack of funds can hinder a church's ministry, causing needed programs, mission projects, and additional staff to be put aside because of poor budgeting.

Christians will continue to immature and undeveloped until they settle the money questions.

The churches that are consistently successful in raising financial support year-in and year-out have several things in common:

1. They involve the membership in carefully planning expenditures in advance.
2. They cautiously monitor the budget and report income and expenses to the membership;
3. They have a well organized annual budget campaign.
4. They teach stewardship throughout the year.

Most Christian groups regarded the Old Testament teaching of the tithe (Dt. 14:22; Mal. 3:10) as the standard for New Testament giving. This ten percent giving level has functional better in precept than in practice.

Though most church members give much less than ten percent, and too many consider this the ceiling rather than the floor, the tithe has provided a standard for basic Christian stewardship.

From the scriptures, things are taught not as God's plan to raise money, but as His plan to raise His children.

Agricultural farms and plantations

The agricultural sector of the national economy of many developing countries is relatively low in production compared with other industries. In West Africa, governments of various countries are introducing policies, programmes and regulations which are aimed at ensuring higher productivity and income for those engaged in agriculture. Areas in which governments are concerned included: agricultural education, research and extension, agricultural credit, subsidies, plant quarantine services and farm settlement schemes. (p. 56).

The Deeper Life Bible Church as a rich and large Christian organization could set up farm settlements for the benefit of rural dwellers and use it as a bait for spreading knowledge and the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ such as the ECWA and the COCIN church which was 'Faith and Farm' – a branch of the church which deals with direct facts of agriculture.

The Deeper Life Bible Church could also establish fish farm, piggery, poultries, rabbiteries, etc.

The Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA) in 1976 established a Rural Development Department, aimed at catering for the needs of the rural farmers in Nigeria, as well as helping to build a strong church. The department was then called ECWA Rural Development.

The major goal of ECWA is the proclamation of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to those who have not yet received this. But church work also includes the teaching of believers, training, of new leadership, and the active demonstration of the love of God through concern for the needs of others.

The goals of Rural Development are:

- i. To improve the image of farming and to stimulate interest in this occupation because of its importance and potential, both for the individual and the Nation.
- ii. To raise the standard of living of people already involved in farming, to relate the Christian faith to all of man's needs (physical), social and spiritual), and to emphasize the accompanying responsibility.

- iii. To use Rural Development as a channel to stimulate the growth and support of the Christian church and its outreaches.
- iv. To acquaint farmers with government agencies and other agencies and to encourage utilization of these.

In conclusion, the researcher believes that the Deeper Life leadership can borrow leaf from this great vision of ECWA for the rural dwellers but caution must be taken that the physical does not take over the gospel of Christ.

Nursery, primary and post-primary schools

It is not within the range of this project to go into details as far as the history of education in Nigeria, rather its our aim to know that most of older demonstration that have existed in Nigeria for long time have schools which they established: from kindergarten up to the post-primary school level. Such demonstrations include: Catholics, Methodists, Baptists, Anglican, Presbyterian, ECWA, COCIN, EYN, Lutheran, etc, and they gave nearly the same goal, to develop the total personality of man, spirit, soul and body and it will be appropriate if the Deeper Life leadership in her endeavour to indigene to look into the possibility of building and funding schools from the nursery to the post-primary school level especially in Mangu Region where majority of their adherents are rural dwellers.

The words of Prof. Babs Fafunwa mean much to us in this case:

Since the early 1960s many countries have tried to relate education to the needs of the child, his community and his world... education is the aggregate of the processes by which a person develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviors of positive and meaning value in the society in which he lives... the aim of primary and secondary education in Nigeria should be to develop the following abilities in the Nigeria Youth, and for that matter in every African youth. (p. 14).

- i. to think effectively;
- ii. to communicate thought clearly;
- iii. to make relevant judgements;
- iv. to play his part as a useful member of his home and family;
- v. to understand and appreciate his role as a citizen of a sovereign country;

- vi. to understand basic facts about health and sanitation;
- vii. to understand and appreciate his cultural heritage;
- viii. to develop economic efficiency both as a consumer and producer of goods;
- ix. to acquire some vocational skills;
- x. to recognize the ability of labour;
- xi. to develop ethical character;
- xii. to develop a scientific altitude;
- xiii. to live and act as a well-integrated individual.

From the following, we can deduce that the Deeper Life Bible Church in her bid to indigenize the work in the north could as well start nursery schools up till the post-primary levels and employ godly teachers and administrators to oversee these schools in order that they could effectively communicate the gospel to the indigenes especially through the Deeper Life School Outreach which is an arm of the church that has the responsibility to students in their school days.

Local music instruments and dance

The Deeper Life Bible Church may also introduce dancing into the indigenous churches. Dancing is a value worthy of note among Africans. Dancing in the African concept is a sign of expressing joy. It may have other purposes, but when it comes to religion and other social activities it could mean joy. Within the service periods of the already existing churches that are commonly found amongst the various ethnic groups that make up the Mangu Region, dancing and use of local musical instruments such as local drums, ‘Tom-Tom, ‘local tambourines known as ‘Molo’ in Hausa language, etc, could be allowed, dancing accompanied by singing and drumming occurs at certain stages. Sometimes it could be rigorous and prolonged.

At certain periods the drumming and dancing could be accompanied with clapping of hands while singing also goes on. Of recent some indigenous churches have introduced these features – clapping, drumming, dancing, etc, into their service hours. The Hausa speaking churches of Evangelical Churches of West (ECWA) and Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) make sure of these African melodies like the pots, samba gong and other accompanying vices.

The Deeper Life leadership should encourage local music in her indigenous churches worship hours such as has been stated above by the (ECWA) and

(COCIN) churches as music is accompanied with local instrumentation. Deeper Life could also show interest in local music in that music competition should be organized every year in Mangu Region and the six districts. The best choirs should be awarded prizes.

For example, late twenties use folk songs and clapping of hands used in many Christian worship centres. For example, in the Anglican church, the Rt. Rev. L. M. Uzodike now retired, soon after the war appointed a church music committee under the chairmanship of Barrister F.M. Obianyo. The first Niger Diocesan music festival was held on 3rd November, 1974, and was won by St. Thomas Church Choir Oraukwu in Anambra State. Many songs, which were hitherto regarded as paganism, were refined and given fresh meanings. They are now used in church services and Deeper Life can borrow leaves from the method of the Anglicans in indigenizing the songs to suit the local folks (15).

Concluding this issue of folk music and dancing, the researcher would want to encourage DLBC to encourage indigenous music by the words of Rev. Jimmy Stewart:

Ten years ago traditional and urban gospel artists shared the stage less frequently. Traditional gospel with its swaying choirs and swelling organ accomplishment – is established and slightly parental, while urban gospel is more daring, fired by loud technology and rap solo ... look around and you'll find gospel music everywhere – in television, in Hollywood films and in New York Theatre... gospel is certain getting more exposure. Its being done even professionally now, which enhance its exposure. ... at one time gospel music only reached religious folks. Now gospels music is spreading the Christian message into society at a time when others are spiritually hunger. ... whatever form it takes today, gospel music remains a music that belongs to a people – to its writers, composers, poets, preachers, politicians, mothers, fathers, sons and daughters. Many African-American say gospel music still is far more than just a style of music. It is the cry of a people to their god. It is a music anchored by themes of joy, perseverance and victory. It celebrates the forgiveness of Jesus, the hope of heaven and the power of praise... At its heart is the promise of spiritual freedom, which for

black Americans, has been tested in the curable of slavery, civil-rights, injustice and present racism.. one thing is sure: plenty of gospel artists on the scene today are ready to provide answers for a troubled society ... Gospel music is the source of our being traditional or contemporary, it comes from the heart (pp. 37-43).

Recommendations

All these evaluations and findings will mean anything if the Deeper Life Bible Church continues in her conservative methods rather from time to time she can set up various committees who will review all the machineries that have been set up for the success of the indignation policy. The ones that are not helping to fulfil the vision of the indignation policy should be scrapped and others refined in order to be effective. It is the view of the researcher that indignation in its entirety is not completely bad but should be handled with caution so that the church of Jesus Christ does not settled down for the non-essentials to the detriment of the spread of the gospel that goes beyond every tribe, tongue, people, nations, etc.

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