Towards a Biblical Model of Funding African Missions: The Case of The Church of Pentecost in Ghana[1]

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to find out how the Church of Pentecost in Ghana, a missional African church, can improve the funding of its African missions. Based on a modified version of the Osmer model of practical theology, the study used literary, biblical analysis and qualitative approaches. The missions-funding praxis of the church was analysed against biblical guidelines, to formulate improved praxis relevant to Africa-to-Africa missions-funding. The study does not only suggest improvement to missions-funding praxis for the Church of Pentecost, but could be useful to other missional churches in Africa. It could also provide guidance for missiology and church administration students in African seminaries. The study is timely for missions-funding, given the emerging trend of Africa-to-Africa missions.

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1. Introduction

Africa as a force in mission is demonstrated in the new paradigm of African missional churches funding mission on the African continent (Africa-to-Africa missions). Funding missions naturally raises issues relating to generosity, giving and poverty (cf. Myers 2011:130; Franklin and Niemandt 2015:384–409; Tongoi 2015:1039–1050). Some scholars have broached aspects of the topic of missions-funding. Lederleitner (2010:838–928) discusses implications of accountability of money in missions. Others have also initiated discourses on funding missions (cf. Shant 2001:41–116; Stout 2008:15–43; Mawudor 2016:179–184). Nevertheless, Bate (2001:50) opines that little research has been undertaken regarding money and missions, and terms it 'academic neglect'. This seeming lack of adequate literature on missions-funding is confirmed in the praxis of some Pentecostal denominations which do not even have structures for funding missions (Oduro 2014:86). McGee (2012:207) also gives hints of similar missional tendencies among Pentecostal missionaries in the United States of America, in the early 20th century. This could probably have accounted for the seemingly limited literature on missions-funding.

This backdrop prompted this study's investigation into the missions-funding praxis of the Church of Pentecost in Ghana (CoP-Ghana). The CoP-Ghana has a presence in 100 countries, 43 of which are in Africa. CoP-Ghana originated from the United Kingdom, and later became an indigenous African church in 1953, when the founder, James McKeown, left the Apostolic Church-United Kingdom. Its missional praxis has since been marked by growth in numbers and funding without Western support. For example, CoP-Ghana has ventured into missions in Africa, through a structured missions-funding. Compared to some of the African Initiated Churches (AICs), CoP-Ghana in its present missions-funding, appears different. For example, there have been improvements in designated funding, unlike the early Pentecostal missions. Some of the AICs pride themselves on not having mission boards, a mission week or even designated funding (Oduro 2014:86). This AICs' approach could lead to dwindling missions-funding. However, it is proposed that CoP-Ghana has some lessons to learn from the missions-funding praxis of some of the early mainline denominations.

Ntumy (1998:10) attributes the financial strength of CoP-Ghana to the self-supporting policy of the church, inculcated by the founders of the church (The Church of Pentecost 2008; 2011:93). The church seems to mobilise and allocate its funds in an organised manner, towards its mission and other related ventures. It also appears to

be using the self-supporting approach. However, practices over the years bring out issues such as the lack of a clear definition of a specific missions-funding praxis, effectiveness of funding structures, and the African nations' expectations as against those of CoP-Ghana. Arising out of this problem, the following objectives were formulated for the study:

The main objective of this paper is to find out how CoP-Ghana can improve its praxis of funding African missions. The subsidiary objectives were as follows:

- to examine the issues of funding missions from pertinent theology literature;

- to discuss and examine biblical guidelines for funding missions;

- to describe, examine and assess the current practices used by CoP-Ghana to fund its African missions, and their implications for the church; and

- to formulate and construct an appropriate biblical model for CoP-Ghana to improve on funding missions.

The study adopted a modified version of the Osmer (2008) model of practical theology approach. The Osmer model states that practical theology research should first describe the current situation; interpret why the current situation is happening; outline a preferred situation; and formulate a response. The four stages of the Osmer model were modified into five stages, namely, exploratory task, normative task, descriptive-empirical task, interpretative task and pragmatic task. This modification confirms the higher level of literary and biblical analysis required in this study. Consideration was also given to the evangelical orientation of this study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Historical survey

2.1.1. Mission

Verkuyl (1978:90) proposes a three-tier definition of missions as follows:

- To get people to believe in Christ as the saviour and confess his Lordship.

- The need to proclaim a Messianic message that would result in bringing together people to God.

- Resisting participation in evil deeds.

It could be deduced from Verkuyl's definition that it spans both the Old and New Testaments, and particularly, alludes to the proclamation to draw people from evil to God. Haar (2016:85) recently, however, ties money to mission in the contemporary world. She maintains the appropriate use of money in Christian mission is 'the responsibility towards the outside world of Christian churches and groups'. This could imply missions have other facets, including use of money and other resources. Haar (2016:85) evidently extends Verkuyl's definition, by including the use of money in missions. Bosch (2011:9–11), however, challenges the *status quo,* and maintains that 'mission remains undefinable'. He therefore sees his definition of mission as an interim one. From Bosch's plethora of discussions of mission, what attracts this study is that: mission (singular) enunciates the good news that God is a God-for-people (*Mission Dei*). He accordingly distinguishes missions (plural) as the missionary ventures of the Church (the *mission ecclesiae*) from mission (singular). This means missions (plural) is participation in the *Mission Dei*. This could include funding missions, which involves participation in the mission venture through funding. It is with this understanding that the current study employs the plural term 'missions' at appropriate sections of this study. However, the terms 'mission', 'funding missions', 'missions-funding' and other related terms are then applied throughout this study with these understandings. From this background, the study discusses the historical development of funding missions from the 19th to 21st century.

2.1.2. Funding of missions in the 19th-21st century

The key participants in missions-funding in the 19th century were from the Western World. It was a situation, where the Western World had become the 'haves' – meaning having the resources, and the majority world branded the 'have nots'– meaning they did not have the resources. Specifically, the principal actors were the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and a few others, such as the Baptist Convention of England, and the Church Missionary Society from England. For example, in terms of a model of funding missions, while the SBC was practising designated funding by individual churches (McClellan 1985:14–23), the ABCFM controlled missions-funding from the ABCFM headquarters, through people who were willing to go on missions, including seminary students (Showalter 2012:1-7).

Nevertheless, there were some challenges. The SBC was challenged by inadequate funding, while the ABCFM was

challenged by defining which missionary qualified for missions-funding. What this meant for the ABCFM was that if one was not in frontline evangelism, one could not be sponsored. However, by the 20th century, realities on the ground had helped both the SBC and the ABCFM to solve their challenges in missions-funding.

In the 20th and 21st centuries, Africa had its taste of missions. This happened more in the 20th century, when some African countries ventured into missions. This was particularly among the Pentecostals and other AICs. This African initiative was characterised by a spontaneous move into missions without planned financial support, but relying on the Holy Spirit as recounted by Oduro (2014:86). There were a few who had some planned support from countries such as Nigeria and Ghana. For example, Ezemadu (2012:12) informs of the Glory Tabernacle, whose members were mobilising US$ 25,000 every year to support 200 missionaries. Ezemadu (2006:4) in another instance recounts how the Gospel Missionaries, Missions Supporters and the CoP-Ghana, have created structures to support missions in the 21st century. Clark (2005:143–161) analyses mission efforts of the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Assemblies of God in Southern Africa, and confirms their financial investments in some African nations. This confirms that Africans have not been left out in missions-funding in Africa. Arising out of the various missions-funding approaches, and the challenges they handled, there have been contemporary missions-funding models, which have emerged from practices in the 19th and 20th centuries.

2.2. Contemporary models of funding missions

Pocock, Van Rheenen and McConnell (2011:5389–5756) describe the self-supporting model as one of three 'selfs': self-propagating, self-governing and self-supporting. Self-propagating implies the missions church's ability to carry on the great commission (Tippet 1973); and self-governing implying the church being effective in governance. Bush (1990:15) defined the self-supporting model as missions-funded churches, depending on their own local economy. Although the self-supporting model had been introduced by early missions thinkers, such as William Carey (1761–1834), in China, and later in Korea, it appears to have been mostly credited to Henry Venn (1796–1873) of the CMS and Rufus Anderson (1796–1834) of the ABCFM (Shenk 1981:170). This could probably be due to the efforts of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson. He explains that Henry Venn's view of self-supporting comes from a rather humanitarian and evangelisation concern. This humanitarian concern could have probably been borrowed from slave trade abolitionists, such as William Wilberforce and David Livingstone.

However, some missiologists intended a purely theological basis for the self-supporting model (cf. Nevius 1899:7–18; Allen 1927:51–66). These were probably considering the spirituality of the indigenous people in missions. The implication could be that self-supporting, as a missions-funding model, has different interpretations in different contexts. The model appears to have been challenged by some contemporary scholars, suggesting that if it is not used in the right context it can breed dependency in missions (Schwartz 1999:593; Van Rheenen 2001:5).

The introduction of other models may have been related to the challenges. These include the post-colonial model (Reese 2008:309), the indigenous model (Pocock, Van Rheenen and McConnell 2011:5389–5756), partnership model (Ma and Ma 2010:128–131), and indigenous-partnership Pocock *et al.* (2011:5389–5756). Nevertheless, these other models appear to be variants of the self-supporting model. It is therefore not the name of the model, but the reality of its practice in a particular context that counts. For example, the partnership model may not necessarily be an equal partnership, because of inequality in the distribution of global wealth.

2.3. Poverty and the funding of African missions

Myers (2011:130) explains that the complexity of poverty involves the limitation of physical, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual needs of humankind. Any missions-funding model which does not consider poverty may not be sustainable. This is because poverty reduces people to looking to other people constantly for their needs. When these needs are not satisfied, they blame the donors (Tongoi 2015:1039–1050). Tongoi further opines that in the midst of poverty, people develop a low esteem of themselves. Some scholars have confirmed in their writings from different parts of Africa that corruption, both in the church and society entrenches poverty (Gathogo 2011:133–151; Mwambazambi 2012:1–6; Lang 2014:132–144).

Dealing with poverty should therefore consider the complexity of poverty in Africa. The physical, psychological, and socio-political limitations should be investigated and minimised accordingly. The church has a role to play, as well as the governments of Africa. In dealing with poverty in Africa, Roots and Fairbanks (2005:1–19) suggest there should be a mutual commitment model that has the characteristics of:

- Discipleship
- Life-changing

- Transforming

- Thankfulness

There should be collaboration between the church and civil society to work tenaciously against corruption and apathy so as to alleviate poverty, which has taken over almost every facet of African society. Tongoi's (2015:1039–1050) analysis of the state of poverty, involving low esteem and the blame game, could be further researched on methods to facilitate the lessening of poverty.

3. Biblical Guidelines for Missions Funding

3.1. Old Testament

It was God's desire for his people to worship him. That was part of the reason for which God wanted his people to leave Egypt (Exod 5:1; 7:16; 8:1; 9:1). God wanted them to build a tabernacle and gave specific instructions. First, Moses was to collect items from people who had willing hearts (Exod 25:3–7). Second, they were to give a variety of items. Third, they were to work according to God's specification (Exod 25:8-9).

Deuteronomy 14:22–29 also offers some useful guidelines for funding missions, but in another context. The context is God setting standards for how the needy could benefit from the tithes. God considers the Levites, widows, the fatherless and foreigners. This confirms how God cares for the needy, by utilising the funds that were raised. The Old Testament directs the manner in which God raises the funds and how the money is to be distributed, with particular reference to the needy. It also provides guidelines for structures to be used in missions-funding. These imply missions-funding in contemporary times should not deviate from the expectations of God.

3.2. New Testament

The New Testament also provides insights into the way Jesus funded his ministry, through those who benefitted from the ministry. It shows the nature of an appeal that has Christological motivation.

We see the approach Jesus took to fund his ministry, in Luke 8:3. Some women followed Jesus and met the needs of the ministry. It is important to know that the women were part of the ministry, moving from village to village with Jesus. That could have given them insights into Jesus' ministry. Capper (2008:113) mentions that Jesus' team had their money in common. The money was

therefore used for the needs of the team (John 13:29). They also used it to minister to the needy people (Mark 14:4–6), and it appears that provision for the poor was paramount.

The early church's way of funding was by the free will giving of the people. Also, the church had a way of resolving issues regarding resources (Acts 6:1–7).

In 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9, the Apostle Paul's appeal for funding was based on love for Jesus and his sacrificial death. It is important to note the grace that led the Macedonian churches to fund the famine project promoted by Paul. The grace-giving notwithstanding, Paul found suitable structures to manage the funds (2 Cor 8:20–21). Bruce (1985:112) explains, 'It is clear that Paul took every care that financial negotiations in which he was involved should be carried out in a way that would stand the keenest scrutiny…' In the case of the Philippian church's support for Paul in mission, it appears that it was motivated by the Holy Spirit (Phil 4:10–20). This same love through the Holy Spirit's power was shown among the believers in Acts 2:42–47.

There are certain similarities between the Old and New Testament approaches to funding. In both, there were structures and the poor were considered. However, the structures for funding in the Old Testament were pre-defined as to how the tithes were to be distributed. The New Testament structures were set up when the need arose (Acts 6:1–7). The care for the needy notwithstanding, giving was participatory, because it was not left to only the 'haves' of the time.

4. Description of the Current Practice of Missions-funding

Data was collected through interviews, focus group discussion, document study and participant-observation, involving 60 participants from 20 African countries where CoP-Ghana has mission activities. The findings emerging out of the data analysis are discussed in this section.

4.1. Self-supporting identity

The respondents mentioned self-supporting as the model, and this had also been documented by CoP-Ghana (The Church of Pentecost 2008). Bush (1990:16) defined the self-supporting model of funding '…as mission-funded churches, depending on their own local economy'. However, the practice of missions-funding revealed by the data analysis of this study does not seem to agree with the definition of the self-supporting model in the theology literature reviewed. The CoP-Ghana self-supporting model has traces of

indigenous and partnership models. The participants also saw the CoP-Ghana model as biblical.

4.2. Funding structures

The financial structures of CoP-Ghana appear effective for funding. Nevertheless, it was found that the structures barely work in the African nations. The reasons provided included lack of trained personnel. The mission administrators agree on the main sources of funding, namely, monthly missions offering, a yearly McKeown mission fund, and donations from individuals and groups. The African nation leaders of CoP mentioned tithes, offering, and grants. The grants were mainly from Ghana, but in some cases the allocation of yearly budgets is thinly spread.

4.3. Poverty and missions-funding

All participants acknowledged poverty as a key challenge in the African nations. This was evidently confirmed by the large number of members in the African nations' engagement in subsistence employment. However, poverty alleviation does not appear to be a major item in the agenda of missions-funding practice. Accordingly, despite the financial investments of CoP-Ghana in the African nations, the results do not reflect the input. Nonetheless, the African nations expect further major financial investments to alleviate poverty. On the other hand, the mission administrators prefer training and empowerment.

4.4. Welfare of mission nation leaders

The welfare of both the indigenous ministers and missionaries appeared to be a concern, which was articulated discreetly by a few missionaries, and mostly by the indigenous mission leaders during the interviews. They appreciated what they were receiving from CoP-Ghana, but wanted a few structural and quantum changes in their remuneration so as to be on a par with the cost of living in the African nations.

4.5. Improvements in missions-funding

The CoP-Ghana's approach to improving its missions-funding includes efforts to develop infrastructure in the African nations. However, the improvement approaches are not standardised and well defined to bring about transformational change in the missions-funding practice.

5. Discussion and assessment of the current practice of missions-funding

5.1. Self-supporting identity

The participants saw the CoP-Ghana model as biblical in nature, quoting the Bible to support their claims. Apart from the self-supporting model, some participants mentioned other missions-funding models, such as the indigenous and partnership models. The disparities among the participants seemed to suggest an identity challenge for CoP-Ghana, regarding its missions-practice model. There appeared to be identity confusion in the missions-funding model, because the more senior administrators seem to identify with the self-supporting model, while the others appeared not to be sure of the model being practised by CoP-Ghana, during the interviews, and focus group discussion of this study. This identity challenge might lend credence to the multiple interpretation of the self-supporting model by different proponents as discussed in the literature (cf. Nevius 1899:7–18; Allen 1927: 51–66; Bush 1990:15–16). To complicate this identity challenge of the model, there were documents confirming that the founder of CoP-Ghana, James McKeown, had his own model of self-supporting, which appeared to differ from that of some of the early proponents (cf. Leonard 1989:170–171; Onyinah 2016:17). McKeown's beliefs in the Bible might have shaped his own understanding of funding missions (cf. Allen 1927). This might have led the participants to affirm that the CoP-Ghana model is biblical. This assertion may, however, be set against the current practice, where annual grants are given to the mission nations from Ghana.

5.2. Funding structures

The findings of this study indicated that although CoP-Ghana operates effective funding structures in Ghana, the question is, why do these financial structures seem not to work in the African mission nations (The Church of Pentecost 2013; 2014; 2015)? Could it be that not enough consideration has been given to effective means of communicating these structures to the mission nations? Although the African nation participants gave indications of a lack of personnel, there could be various approaches to correct this weakness. For example, Lederleitner (2010:chap.7) provides ample counsel on the cultural complexity of ensuring accountability in missions. Other scholars also provide practical financial guidelines for churches (cf. Malphurs 2013:255–282; Cunningham (2013:451–458).

5.3. Poverty and missions-funding

The participants confirmed the level of poverty among the African mission nations, which has affected the church members financially. They also believe poverty is caused by the corrupt leadership of the African nations. They therefore needed some kind of social and economic interventions. It appears, however, that the suggested approach to poverty alleviation could be different, depending who was talking about it. The African nations appear to desire a major financial investment, as against CoP-Ghana's orientation towards training and empowering to enable the African nations to become self-aware in solving their poverty problem.

5.4. Welfare of mission leaders

The concern of the mission leaders centres around their own welfare. Their standard of living could affect their performance, because their salaries may not be adequate in some circumstances. Economic analysis of the welfare of leaders in the African nations appears to have eluded COP-Ghana. However, there may be structural mis-matches that could create a major crisis. The mission leaders represent the priests and Levites of our time and need to be treated as such (Deut chap. 14). This calls for a major intervention towards improving missions-funding. The situation should therefore be considered in light of what scripture teaches and be addressed accordingly.

5.5. Improvements in missions-funding

The discussions in the previous sections, as noted from the findings, call for improvements in the missions-funding praxis of CoP-Ghana. However, the approach to the improvement needs to be considered, if it is to be holistic and sustainable. The findings show that the improvements attempted so far may rather require a contemporary transformational change approach, if they are to be sustainable. This must combine leadership backed by the Holy Spirit's direction and an understanding of the shift of vitality in Christianity to the majority world in current times (cf. Atterbury 2002:iv-v; Tsekpoe 2017:1–12). This approach could produce a standardised transformational approach to change.

6. Formulating a Biblical Model to Improve Missions-Funding Praxis

6.1. Self-supporting model

CoP-Ghana may need to define what it understands by the self-supporting model of missions-funding practice. This definition may

have to consider the various interpretations of the model in various circumstances. A clear definition of the model could lead to African-specific solutions to the missions-funding, because if the circumstances of the individual African nations were considered, the model would work well in the African nations. This will provide a clear model that would be owned by various African mission nations.

6.2. Funding structures

The structures of missions-funding in the African nations could be improved by having complete control of all donations coming from groups and individuals. Again, a portion of the tithes in Ghana could be allocated to missions, instead of the monthly missions-funding. The weak structures in the African nations could be repaired by a two-pronged approach. The first is ensuring that everyone posted to the African nations is adequately trained in the basic missions-funding practices to be adopted. Second, small portions of the mission funds should be allocated to monitoring. Funds should not be thinly allocated, but be concentrated in a particular geographical area in Africa, if prudence and economy are to be achieved.

6.3. Poverty

The CoP-Ghana could achieve poverty alleviation by researching the African economy and understanding the causes of poverty in Africa. This could help to deal with the inequality syndrome that has created 'haves' and 'have nots'. In effect, the culture of poverty could be reduced in the congregations of CoP-Ghana. Corbett and Fikkert (2012:99) provide a systematic way of dealing with poverty.

6.4. Welfare of mission leaders

The welfare of mission leaders should be treated as a sensitive and human welfare issue that should not be handled lightly. CoP-Ghana may have to be proactive in responding to the living-conditions of these mission leaders. This should follow the biblical guidelines, if it is to be improved. There are numerous scriptures that attest to this (Deut 14:29; 2 Chr 31:4–10; 1 Cor 9:11; Gal 6:6). The welfare of these critical agents of CoP-Ghana in missions in Africa, the mission-nation leaders, could make or break the mission.

6.5. Improvements in missions-funding

This study chooses one of the models in the change-management literature: The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach (Reed 2007:32)

to formulate an improved model for funding African missions. The AI could fit better in faith-based organisations. The AI approach is change through strengths. The AI is combined with the biblical guidelines to formulate improvements in the missions-funding praxis of CoP-Ghana as follows:

Discovery: What has worked well could be related to the biblical guidelines. This discovery could be leveraged on by relating best practice, for example, to Allen's (1927:51) Bible-based approach in contemporary times. The willingness of the African nations to find some means to support the work, even when they do not have much, could be a motivating factor (Acts chap. 8).

Dreaming: After discovery, there is the need to envision what might lie in the future for the African nations. Although termed as dreaming, the thinking should not be abstract. It should be a collaborative look at the bigger picture in missions-funding. The apostles in Acts 6:1–7 dreamed of the bigger picture of the ministry of distributing resources.

Designing: The dream should become a reality. Parts of the dream may not work at the designing stage, but the context in designing the missions-funding model could be very important. Collaboration at the design stage with the African nations could be crucial to achieve the desired improvement. The apostles consulted with the community before implementing the choice of the deacons in Acts chapter 6. Further, the design needs to meet God's standards (Exod 25:9).

Delivery. Delivery could be CoP-Ghana's ability to effectively present its missions-funding praxis to the African missions, and receive acceptance. The constituents of the mission-funding praxis, including the specificities and commitments of stakeholders should be agreed. What is delivered should be instilled in the African nation leaders as partners. However, adjustments could be made, since improvement and change are not static. There were adequate structures in both the Old and New Testaments (Exod chap. 25; Deut chap. 14; Acts chap. 6; 2 Cor chaps. 8 and 9).

7. Conclusion

This case study on CoP-Ghana missions-funding praxis could facilitate an improvement in CoP-Ghana's funding of African missions. It could also create awareness for missions-funding praxis in Africa-to-African missions, thereby, benefiting missions-funding practitioners, and leading to improved missions-funding praxis. The study critically incentivises missions-funding, as a unique impetus to Africa-to-Africa missions, by modifying the

Osmer model to fit the analysis of the case study. This could provide enhanced literature for missiology students in Africa, given that a major limitation encountered in this research, among others, was the lack of literature.

Future research opportunities stemming from this study could include a study of the missions-funding praxis of five major African Pentecostal missional churches, and an in-depth qualitative study on the various models of missions-funding praxis.

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