

Article

Nigerian Pentecostal Megachurches and Development: A Diaconal Analysis of the Redeemed Christian Church of God

Babatunde Aderemi Adedibu ^{1,2}

¹ Department of Christian Religious Studies and Philosophy, Redeemer's University, 232101 Ede, Osun State, Nigeria; babatunde.adedibu@rcbc.edu.ng

² Department of Religion and Theology, University of the Western Cape, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Abstract: The Nigerian social, public, political and religious landscapes have changed significantly over time with the emergence and proliferation of Pentecostal megachurches. The majority of these churches are structured and characterized with a peculiar missional focus, ritual, religious and ecclesiastical distinctiveness. Many of these Pentecostal megachurches have been criticized for their economic motivations, exploitation and commercialization of the Christian faith. However, Nigerian megachurches are 'Progressive Pentecostals' on the basis of their sustained commitment to diaconal services towards the development of their communities. Divergent views have emerged over time in relation to the nexus between religion and development. This study argues that religion is one of the motors of development in Africa; this challenges the Western secular framework of development. Hence, the study examines development from below, using the diaconal services of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), a Pentecostal megachurch that illustrates the importance of faith-based organizations' roles in development. A descriptive research method is employed in the study with social capital theory and pneuma-diaconal mission theory to examine the concept of development from below. This study concludes that faith-based organizations such as the RCCG's social responsiveness contributes to the overall development of its various communities.

Keywords: Nigeria; pentecostal megachurches; Redeemed Christian Church of God; development; diaconal; development from below



Citation: Adedibu, Babatunde Aderemi. 2023. Nigerian Pentecostal Megachurches and Development: A Diaconal Analysis of the Redeemed Christian Church of God. *Religions* 14: 70. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010070>

Academic Editors: Johannes Eurich and Ignatius Swart

Received: 28 September 2022

Revised: 2 December 2022

Accepted: 8 December 2022

Published: 4 January 2023



Copyright: © 2023 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The emergence and proliferation of megachurches was initially linked with the Protestant tradition in America; however, the New Testament church (Acts 2: 42–47) is the first 'megachurch' (Hunt 2020, p. 1). Hunt (2020, p. 1) notes that there are various megachurches within the Catholic tradition which are not classified as such due to "largely structural, cultural and theological reasons". Moreover, the term 'mega' is synonymous with extra-large. Asamoah-Gyadu (2019, p. 390) notes that "this is a version of Pentecostalism that holds that not only is God a big God, but that everything about Him must also be grandiose to reflect the prosperity gospel that its leaders propagate." The growth of megachurches is attributable to prosperity preachers in Africa which has been the focus of researchers since the early 2000s (Asamoah-Gyadu 2019, p. 390). The proliferation and growth of Pentecostal megachurches in sub-Saharan Africa, especially Nigeria, have changed the face of world Christianity due to the continued missionary enterprise of megachurches to the Global North. Currently, Nigeria and Kenya have been declared capitals of megachurches as 66.5% of the 119 megachurches in Africa are based in the two countries, with Lagos having 14 of these megachurches (Burgess 2020b, p. 246).

In the same vein, Lagos is described as the capital of "world Pentecostalism" as a result of the grandiose presence of Pentecostalism in the city (McGrath 2007). Lagos vividly represents what (Katsaura 2020, p. 504) refers to as "Pentecostopolis," that is, the nexus between Pentecostalism and cosmopolitanism. It is quite obvious that many urban cities

in Nigeria have undergone remarkable spatial changes due to the socio-economic and religious effects of urbanization of Nigerian Pentecostal megachurches. [Asamoah-Gyadu \(2019, p. 390\)](#) and [Hunt \(2020, p. 1\)](#) note that the Pentecostal megachurches have ensured the impressive transformation of suburban areas into developed cities by their imposing architectural design and development.

The proclivity of Nigerian megachurches is not only in terms of their grandiose edifices, but also their religious innovations, creativity and development initiatives in the various communities where they are situated. The commitment of Nigerian megachurches to development is a by-product of contextual socio-economic and theological motifs. The Nigerian economy is in dire straits due to a multiplicity of reasons. These include neo-liberal economic reforms which entail market-oriented reform policies such as deregulating capital markets, lowering trade barriers and denationalization of service provision that heralded a new dispensation of social responsiveness of faith-based organizations. Leadership ineptitude, corruption and failed fiscal policies are causal to the religious sector's social responsiveness that has brought succor to many people. In fact, the only thriving sector, apart from crude oil, might perhaps be the religious sector, in particular the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements ([Obadan 2010, p. 20](#)).

This study discusses the historical trajectory of Nigeria in relation to Pentecostal megachurches and the concept of development. The paper examines religion and development dynamics within the purview of the changing Nigerian Christian landscape characterized by the implosion of the Pentecostal megachurches. It further argues that it is increasingly impossible to discuss development without acknowledging religion as a 'vehicle' of development specifically within the Nigerian context. The broader implication is that developmental agencies and policy formulators are now paying more attention to the contributions of religion to development. This study further validates changes in various multinational and global fiscal institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the British Department for International Development and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development's acknowledgement of the role of religion in development ([Öhlmann et al. 2020, p. 1](#)).

The study makes use of the descriptive method, while its theoretical framework is Spiritual Capital Theory and Pneuma-Diaconal Mission Theory ([White 2015, pp. 1–12](#); [Malloch 2003, pp. 7–29](#)). The article is divided into four sections. The first section examines the nexus between religion and development which gives a qualitative perspective of the two concepts and their functionalities. The second section examines the theoretical framework of the study which explains the significance of the study as well as its validity. The third section analyses social responsiveness together with the contributions of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) to development as one of several examples of Nigerian Pentecostal megachurches. The fourth section concludes the article by arguing that RCCG is one of several Nigerian Pentecostal churches that is contributing to development of various communities owing to its commitment to service (diakonia) in Nigeria.

2. The Nexus between Religion and Development

Functional dynamics between development and religion were heralded over two decades ago which later resulted in a "religious turn" in international development theory, policy and praxis ([Kaag and Saint-Lary 2011, p. 1](#)). Scholars (e.g., [Swart and Nell 2016, pp. 1–12](#); [Öhlmann et al. 2020, p. 1](#)) have examined the interface between development and religion from interdisciplinary perspectives traversing the fields of theology, religious studies, anthropology sociology, politics and development studies. This interdisciplinary approach has led to multifaceted research leading to various opportunities to nuance the nature and motifs of religious movements development studies. Some social scientists have recently acknowledged religion as a factor in development ([Adogame 2013, pp. 32–42](#)) contrary to the Western position in the 1960s and 1970s that religion plays little or no critical role in development ([Tomalin 2015, pp. 1–14](#); [Ter Haar 2011](#); [Clarke 2011](#); [Adedibu 2018](#),

pp. 1–14). The Western position on development studies was as a result of the secularization of their societies.

Within the last two decades, Western development agencies recognized the importance and contributions of faith-based organizations in development. Some of the organizations include the Department for International Development and the financial institutions, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The apparent change in many global developmental agencies in the recognition of the nexus between religion and development is due to the increasing intervention of faith-based organizations in addressing poverty in many communities (Adedibu 2018, p. 4).

In addition, some South African scholars have interrogated “the concept of development from a theological perspective partly because of its role in the civil society and church life since the 1990s” (Klaasen 2013, p. 183). Burgess (2020a) identifies three strands that have led to religion being recognized as one of the motors of development. The tripodal strands are:

the rise of political Islam; the continuing salience of religion in people’s lives, associated especially with the growth of Pentecostal and Evangelical Christianity in developing countries; and recognition of the importance of non-government organizations (NGOs), including religious organizations, as mechanisms for delivering development in contexts where neoliberal reforms have resulted in the withdrawal of the state from welfare provision (Burgess 2020a, p. 3).

There are claims that when faith-based organizations are involved in development, it is mainly a functional role but there is uncertainty as to whether there is a positive or negative correlation between development and religion (Basedau et al. 2018, pp. 1106–33). Religious movements are able to change the narrative of development due to their theological framework and contextual knowledge based on the street credibility of their leaders in appropriating human and spiritual capital within their religious communities for the common good of the society (Bowers Du Toit 2020, pp. 311–21). Nevertheless, there exists reservations with respect to the contributions of religion to secular development. A typical illustration is that “... nowhere in the United Nations resolution on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is religion or are religious communities mentioned explicitly” (Öhlmann et al. 2018, p. 3). Interestingly, religious movements’ conceptualization of development is inclusive of religion, particularly in the developing world. This stems from the fact that “religion is part of the social fabric, integrated with other dimensions of life” (Öhlmann et al. 2016, p. 10). Hence, religious movements pursue these goals in diverse ways. Pentecostals and development practitioners hold a clear objective of emancipation and transformation. Religious movements are quite diverse in terms of theology, praxis and ecclesiastical character. However, for African or Nigerian Pentecostals, development is not only defined in economic terms, but also includes links to a spiritual realm that can either impede or promote economic development (Burgess 2020a, p. 10). Thus, African Pentecostals present an alternative to the post-development theory of the 1960s and 1970s and mainstream development as noted by Freeman (2012, p. 9) who posited that:

“While they [Pentecostals] embrace the mainstream capitalist ‘spirit of development’ with its desire for wealth and commodity consumption, they maintain a magico-religious worldview in sharp contrast to mainstream development’s rational secularism. And while they acknowledge the existence of traditional practices and values, they seek to break away from them, in stark contrast to the post-development theorists who seek to base new models of the future in these traditional pasts.”

Pentecostal perspective on development repudiates the age-long misconception of the concept of development by some social scientists who excluded the spiritual and cultural facets from it. Hence, the reconceptualization of the concept of development is not based only on econometric factors and binary classifications of the world into developed or under-developed. The imperialistic and colonial exploitation of many countries in the developing

nations and the “economics of unequal exchange” (Adogame 2016, pp. 1–11) justify the binary position. Thus, development should be considered from ‘below’ (Adogame 2016, p. 2). The concept of development from below addresses the needs of the producers, consumers and local community. It attempts to meet basic demands (Stohr and Taylor 1981), to improve human health and wellbeing (Ekins 1986, p. 8), and to promote diversity and complementarity. It focuses more on addressing the equitable distribution of wealth (McRobie 1986, p. xii). It aims to improve people’s productivity, creativity and independence as well as the family and community support networks (McRobie 1986, p. xi).

3. Nigerian Pentecostalism and Development

Ukah (2020, p. 445) argues that “Pentecostal paradoxes whereby growth and increased individualization have failed to produce social reform and transformation in Africa” invalidate the claim that Pentecostal churches in Africa have produced social transformation and reform. It is apt to note that the re-making of the Weberian Protestant ethic is at the center of contemporary Pentecostalism (Bernstein and Rule 2010, pp. 91–131). This is due to the fact that Pentecostal churches have numerous principles that fit into Weber’s description of the Protestant ethic. Nigerian Pentecostals, in the same way as their African counterparts, do not embark on large-scale developmental projects but are involved “in setting up development wings and joining in with explicitly development-focused activities” (Freeman 2015, pp. 114–26). The most significant contributions of Nigerian Pentecostalism to development are “from changes instilled in believers by the religious activities of churches themselves. In this, ‘religious’ activities of these churches are not separated from ‘development’. Church leaders take a holistic focus on the ‘whole person’ and try to bring about change socially, economically as well as spiritually” (Freeman 2015, p. 116).

From Freeman’s assertion, the social transformation agenda of Nigerian Pentecostalism revolves around the personal transformation of the adherents. This entails personal transformation from fear of malevolent forces, despair and fear of the unknown which are changed to positive mental resilience, empowerment, optimism and willingness to take risks and openness to opportunities. These behaviors engender changes in moral rectitude, self-discipline, restraint, hard work, discipline and avoidance of dysfunctional relationships, saving culture and non-alcoholic consumption or avoiding drunkenness and its consequences (Bernstein and Rule 2010, pp. 96–106). However, the personal transformation of Nigerian Pentecostal adherents has not led to national transformation due to systemic leadership failings, nepotism, fiscal recklessness of policies and contextual challenges of the country.

Pentecostalism, like the African Initiated Churches (AICs), generates social capital which has been observed by several scholars who affirm development from the below thesis (Öhlmann et al. 2016, pp. 1–12; Bompani 2015, p. 106; Bernstein and Rule 2010, pp. 105, 116, 122; Bompani 2008, pp. 665–77). For instance, Adogame (2016, pp. 1–11) in his transnational ethnographic study of RCCG argues that RCCG generates social capital through its network of churches in Nigeria and institutional formations. He further argues that the formation of social capital takes place through socialization and the commitment of RCCG adherents to the ethos of the denomination but also emerges as a result of economic and business interests of the adherents worldwide (Adogame 2016, pp. 1–11). This stance resonates with AICs such as the Pentecostal movements in Nigeria which “are networks of mutual support undergirded by strong bonding forces and high degree of trust” (Öhlmann et al. 2016, p. 4).

Nigerian Pentecostal megachurches cannot be said not to have contributed to social transformation despite the presence of inveterate structural inadequacies, corruption and insecurity. Adelokun (2021, pp. 110–12); Ukah (2020, p. 445); Obadare (2016; 2018, p. 2); Ukah (2013, p. 145); and Yong (2012, p. 16) amongst others have criticized the African Pentecostal claim of social transformation or development on the grounds of the prosperity gospel, commoditization of the gospel and the affluent lifestyle of its leaders. For them, prosperity is for the leaders of the movement rather than the followers. However, such criticism fails to take account of the complexities of the African reality where abject

poverty has excruciating effects on the masses. The failure of government to frontally address poverty has made the intervention of Pentecostal diaconality relevant. This article argues that Pentecostal intervention can hardly be substantial and recognizable without collaboration with government and other development agencies. Rather than an isolationist approach to development by Pentecostal leaders, they embrace a synergistic approach (Ter Haar and Ellis 2006, p. 356). Through this approach, more concrete achievements have been recorded by the Pentecostal churches. However, diverse socio-economic, educational and health infrastructures initiated and sustained by Nigerian megachurches are situated in major urban cities of the country. Contributions of Nigeria's faith-based universities in assuaging the declining fortunes of education in the country are probably discountenanced by the Nigerian populace due to seemingly high tuition fees being charged by some of these universities (Oguntola 2012; Omotoye 2006, p. 141).

Ukah's (2020, p. 443) assertion that "no Pentecostal organisation is involved in commercial food production and distribution" is an unsubstantiated generalisation. For example, the RCCG Apapa Family commitment to agricultural enterprise since 2017 with a mandate to raise 200 millionaire farmers is a point of reference (Olawale 2017). Likewise, RCCG Jesus House's Integrated Restoration Farm in Port Harcourt, Nigeria is a sustainable farm with the aim of empowering youths in agri-business.

One cannot fully appreciate the extent of Nigerian Pentecostal social intervention without underscoring the importance of, and link with, the prosperity gospel. Prosperity gospel teaching harps on divine intervention in believers' lives to grant them access to wealth and health. The abundance of wealth resulting from prosperity teaching is channeled into a social Christian interventionist agenda, which is aptly referred to as progressive Pentecostalism as these development wings are independently funded by Pentecostal churches (Burgess 2015, pp. 176–204). It is from this point that diaconal-pneumatic work of the megachurches makes sense. However, Nigerian Pentecostal megachurches' leaders have been criticized due to their perceived commoditization of various facets of the life of the church (Adelakun 2021, pp. 110–12; Obadare 2016, p. 2; Ukah 2013, p. 145). Nevertheless, Yong (2012, pp. 15–33) views the prosperity gospel through a more positive lens and highlights the prosperity gospel's contributions to different aspects of the economic field.

In the context of poverty, disease and poor development, Nigerian Pentecostal megachurches present the vista of opportunity to examine their roles in contributing to development. These churches are called to service (diakonia) in every geo-political zone as well as the social and economic context of the Nigerian state (White 2018, p. 1).

4. Spiritual Capital Theory and Pneuma-Diaconal Mission Theory

The concept of spiritual capital builds on social capital, which identified religion as a major factor in the formation of social networks and trust. Malloch (2003) notes that spiritual capital is a "unifying theory" with a "normative direction". Furthermore, spiritual capital "is a normative, directional dimension that gives meaning and purpose to all human activity" (Malloch 2003, p. 29). Putnam's (1993, p. 5) definition of social capital centers on "features of social organisations, such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit". Social capital from Putman's perspective fails to "facilitate an understanding of either social action, or of religious behaviour" (Montemaggi and Eva 2010, p. 168) which is adequately recognized in spiritual capital. Implicitly, spiritual capital theory entails personal and group capacities that are generated through affirming and nurturing every human being's intrinsic spiritual value (Palmer and Wong 2013, p. 1).

Contributions of faith-based groups to the larger society through appropriation of networks of trust, guidance and support constitute spiritual capital. The appropriation of the spiritual capital is to address socio-economic and developmental challenges of faith communities and the larger society. It has been noted that "capital in perspective is not economic but the degree of adherence to religious subscriptions, rituals, beliefs and knowledge required to participate in religious activities which is exemplified in the community life of the members of the religious movement that also rubs off on the social

capital of the faith community” (Adedibu 2018, p. 10). This occurs overtime as members of a religious order are part of networks of trust created by their subscription to the religious ideals and idiosyncrasies of the religious order.

Pneuma-diaconal mission theory is the missional praxis that emphasizes societal transformation (White 2020, p. 466). The theory explains pneuma-centric services to people’s groups, communities or individuals through the sharing of the good news of Christ with others and training them in healing and justice in diverse contexts. Pneuma-diaconal mission is predicated on the missional mandate recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 which is described as “ecclesia in which the church is to represent God and be part of the global mission” (White 2020, p. 466). Miller and Yamamori (2007, p. 21) opine that Progressive Pentecostals are “Christians who, inspired by the Holy Spirit and the life of Jesus, seek to address holistically the spiritual, physical, and social needs of people in their community”. The missional responsibility of the church entails spiritual renewal, socio-economic transformation of people and the community through its religious instructions and belief system. Thus, the missionary effort of the church across various cultural frontiers to initiate and sustain churches is fundamentally transformational even to the various communities that the Christian faith encounters in its missionary drive and incarnational lifestyle of adherents. In this way, the Church’s participation in *Missio Dei* contributes to societal development through the diaconal praxis (Balía and Kim 2010, p. 431; Pierson 1989, p. 7).

Diaconal mission approach involves service or ministry praxis motivated by a scriptural basis and pneuma-centric approach to mission which centers on demonstration of love, care and assistance to the marginalized in the society. The diaconal mission approach also includes speaking truth to the unjust social structures and injustice. However, there seems to be dearth of commitment to the prophetic role amongst the African Pentecostal churches (Adedibu 2019, pp. 182–204). White (2020, p. 466) argues that the role of faith-based organizations in development is largely to deliver humanitarian services to the less privileged. As a result of the economic downturn of the late 1980s following the government’s introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) into The Nation’s (2022) polity, Pentecostalism’s healing economy and its contextual theologies appealed to the disillusioned Nigerian populace as the movement responded to the existential realities of Nigerians and their adherents. The pneumatological mission ethos of Pentecostals is holistic through the power of the Holy Spirit but also deals with understanding and functioning of Charisma and Charismata. Furthermore, this also entails liberation and reconciliation of sinners to God, in which the Church is an active partner in the mission of God. This also necessitates spiritual warfare and exorcism (White 2018, p. 131). The missional agenda of Christ succinctly captures the holistic nature of his ministry which gives the basis for the pneumatic transformation of lives and the communities. Jesus gives vent to the pneumatic agenda in his reference to, and advocacy for, love, justice and care for the marginalized and poor (Isaiah 6:1–2; Luke 4:18). It is in this light that the transforming work of grace through diaconal service to various communities can be appreciated.

5. Diaconal Services of the Redeemed Christian Church of God and Contributions to Development

RCCG is one of the most visible indigenous Pentecostal churches in Nigeria and diaspora. The denomination was founded in 1952 by Rev. Josiah Olufemi Akindayomi from a prayer group which consisted of 12 men known as Egbe *Ogo Oluwa* (The Glory of the Lord Fellowship) at Oko-Baba in a swampy parcel of land at No. 9, Willoughby Street, Ebute-Meta, Lagos (Akhazemea and Adedibu 2011, p. 55). RCCG in its founding days was known to be pietistic and puritan in doctrine and religious praxis due to the stance of Rev. Akindayomi on a number of doctrinal matters. Thus, RCCG was averse to the various burgeoning social, doctrinal and ecclesiastical influences from America’s health and wealth preachers of the 1970s until the demise of Rev. Josiah Olufemi Akindayomi on 2nd November, 1980, which signified the end of the first phase of the history of the church. At the time of Akindayomi’s demise, RCCG had 39 parishes mainly in the South

West of Nigeria. Previous scholarship has examined RCCG's growth, mission, history and sacralization of space in Africa and diaspora. RCCG is actively present in about 197 countries (Adedibu 2016, pp. 80–90; Ukah 2009, pp. 104–32; Burgess 2009, pp. 255–73).

RCCG prides itself not only in meeting the spiritual needs of its adherents, but also their social, health, education and *economic* needs particularly the poor and marginalized in the society. RCCG attempts to demonstrate the incarnational nature of Christ. Since its inception, RCCG has been involved in diaconal services in diverse forms although they were hardly publicized. However, in 2011, RCCG's social interventions were incorporated into the administrative structure of the church following the creation of the Office of Assistant Provincial Pastor to oversee the social intervention initiatives (Adeboye 2020, p. 124). This would later metamorphose into Christian Social Responsibility (CSR) coordinated by the Special Assistant to the General Overseer (SATGO) on CSR, Pastor Idowu Iluyomade, since 2018. According to Adeboye, "people want to hear not just about what is going to happen to them when they get to heaven. They also want to see the blessings they can have while they are still here on earth..." (Adeboye 2015, p. 8). This perspective is further corroborated by Iluyomade while defining CSR as the "faith-based obligation to meet societal needs through the demonstration of love that positively impacts communities and individuals" (Iluyomade 2018). The ecclesiastical praxis of RCCG fits into Miller's (2009, p. 280) Progressive Pentecostalism. The next section of this article discusses the distinctive areas of diaconal ministry of RCCG.

5.1. Development and Diaconal Ministry through Provision of Education

The Nigerian educational sector is not immune to the systemic problems of the wider Nigerian society characterized by corruption, declining infrastructural facilities, continuous brain drain, among others. In order for development to take place, the role of educational institutions cannot be over-emphasized as "successful development entails more than investing in physical capital, or closing the gap in capital. It also entails acquiring and using knowledge as well as closing the gaps in knowledge" (Adedibu 2020, p. 147). The creation of knowledge locally through investment in human capital constitutes a remarkable development in the Nigerian educational system. Nigerian Pentecostal churches such as the RCCG have initiated and sustained their investments in the educational sector since the late 1980s with the establishment of primary and post-primary institutions. RCCG provides faith-based educational models for character building and intellectual formation of students. Previously, I argued that RCCG is an educationally minded denomination due to the multiplicities of primary and post-primary educational institutions it has established over the years (Adedibu 2020, p. 146). The first educational institution established by RCCG was pioneered by Pastor Mrs. Folu Adeboye (wife of the General Overseer) in 1981, which later metamorphosed into the Christ Redeemer's School Movement (CRSM), having branches across Nigeria.

RCCG established its first secondary school known as Christ Redeemer's College, Sagamu (in present day Ogun State) on 1 October 1996. The distinctiveness of RCCG's aspiration is very evident with respect to the charge given by Folu Adeboye to the inaugural Board members of CRSM led by the late Prof. (Mrs.) J. I. Macauley in February, 1996 that she desired "a secondary school of high standard with international overtones" (Christ the Redeemer's College 2022). The aspirational charge to the pioneer Board of Governors of CRC was reflective of one of the first prophecies of Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye on assumption of duty as the General Superintendent (now General Overseer) of RCCG that "... he [Pastor E. A. Adeboye] was one to do with education. He [Pastor E. A. Adeboye] talked of a school system that would be totally Christian based on the word of God, run by spirit-filled Christians and on Christian principles..." (Christ the Redeemer's College 2022). In addition, Redeemer's University, Ede, Nigeria was established by RCCG in 2005. Redeemer's University has recorded several commendations within and outside the country and is now a center of excellence for the study of genomics. "Redeemer's University emerged as the highest rated University from amongst 15 highly rated and

prestigious Universities from West and Central Africa selected through a rigorous and transparent exercise for the establishment of African Centre of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases [ACEGID], being funded by the World Bank" (Adeyewa 2015) in 2014.

Apart from ACEGID, Redeemer's University was recently ranked as the best private University in Nigeria in 2021 and the second best university in Nigeria by the National Universities Commission (NUC) which is the statutory regulatory body for university education in Nigeria (Adeyemo 2022). RCCG's commitment to the Nigerian educational sector in the field of Science, Management and Technological education led to the establishment of Redeemer's College of Technology and Management (RECTEM) in 2018. Apart from these institutions, RCCG established its foremost theological college, the Redeemed Christian Bible College (RCBC) in 1980 and Redeemed College of Missions in 1995 which are now affiliates of the Department of Christian Religious Studies and Philosophy, Redeemer's University, Ede (Adedibu 2017, p. 173). These institutions established by RCCG contribute significantly to human capacity building and national development.

5.2. Development and Diaconal Ministry through Provision of Healthcare and Facilities

RCCG has contributed significantly in the area of health and well-being of Nigerians in general. A study conducted by the Lancet on Global Health Care Access and Quality that surveyed 195 countries around the world ranked Nigeria 142nd which shows the parlous state of healthcare in the country (Fullman et al. 2018, pp. 2236–71). The abysmal healthcare statistics were saliently captured by Kuo (2022) who noted that "maternal mortality in Nigeria is among the worst in the world with a whopping 19% of global maternal deaths occurring in the country. Additionally, the infant mortality rate is far too high at 19 deaths per 1000 births. In addition, the mortality rate of children under 5 is 128 per 1000. Moreover, life expectancy in Nigeria is an incredibly low 54.4." In view of this, the role of faith-based organizations such as RCCG is pivotal to holistic healthcare services to Nigerians.

The healthcare establishments of RCCG are multifaceted utilizing diverse interventionist approaches in actualizing its health care objectives. One of RCCG's healthcare establishments is the Redeemed AIDS Program Action Committee (RAPAC) which focuses on HIV and AIDS (Akhazemea and Adedibu 2011, p. 146). The approach of this agency to the challenges of HIV/AIDS is both medical and spiritual. They include education/enlightenment, production of behavioral communication resources on HIV and AIDS, preventative models including abstinence from sexual relationships before marriage and advocacy on HIV and AIDS matters to members of the public. RAPAC has entered into collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Family Health International (Adedibu 2020, p. 146). Other health establishments of RCCG include: Christ Against Drug Abuse Ministry (CADAM), Ikeja; Healing Stripes Hospital, Victoria Island, Lagos; Wellspring Rehabilitation Centre, Ojodu; RCCG Health Centre, Mowe, Ogun State (Adedibu 2021, pp. 103–24) and a host of others.

It has been observed that one of the foremost diaconal services of RCCG was the Maternity Centre which started under the leadership of the founder, the Late Rev. Josiah Akindayomi, (Adeboye 2020, p. 124) that was accessed by the members of wider society and members of RCCG. Over the years, RCCG has succeeded in replicating maternity and health centers in almost all the provinces of the denomination in Nigeria manned by qualified medical personnel through the use of volunteers and paid staff. In an empirical study on RCCG healthcare deliveries which evaluated RAPAC and the Health Center at the Redemption City, Mowe Ogun State, it was discovered that RCCG significantly contributed to the "actualization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) number 3 [as] 48% [of respondents] recognise her [RCCG] contributions as high impact . . . The import of this development is predicated on the accessibility of the healthcare deliveries which is 84% [of the respondents] out of which 46% described it as accessible while 36% were of the opinion that it was very accessible" (Adedibu 2021, p. 122).

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, RCCG donated 11 Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds fully fitted with ventilators in Lagos, Ogun and Plateau states to contribute to improve-

ment of healthcare facilities in Nigeria. For instance, His Love Foundation, RCCG donated 16 Intensive Care Units (ICU)/Dialysis Centers/Cancer Screening Center/Primary Healthcare Centers across the country in July 2021. The fiscal outlay of RCCG on various CSR activities on six focal areas of His Love Foundation which is the charity of the denomination was estimated to be over N18,444,618,335.97, impacting over 130,753,857 people in her 43,000 operating centers spread over the 36 states of the federation ([His Love Foundation 2021](#)). RCCG healthcare services include:

“Medical Mission Outreaches for thousands of people all over the nations with 230,538 beneficiaries, Healing Stripes Hospital provide medical care at affordable prices, with specialization in dentistry and ophthalmology. In partnership with medical institutions abroad, 12 (twelve) successful kidney transplants have been done, Kirikiri Maximum Prison Referral Hospital was refurbished and equipped to provide a decent medical facility for the inmates, Healing Stripes Cancer Screening and Diagnostics Centre have screened over 100,761 people at subsidized rates and Healing Stripes Dialysis Centre have about 9505 completed sessions at subsidized cost and a good number done for free” ([Nnah 2021](#)).

The foregoing highlights the commitment of RCCG healthcare delivery and development in Nigeria. This further reinforces the holistic well-being and health perspective of RCCG.

This represents a “continuity of the work of their precursors, the missionaries and voluntary organisations that cooperated in Europe’s colonisation and control of Africa” ([Manji and O’Coil 2018](#)). The RCCG developmental approach within the Nigerian context over the years has not fully adopted the synergistic approach to its diakonia-pneumatic social responsiveness. This has limited RCCG’s CSR from appropriating institutional and professional competencies of national and global agencies to broaden the scope and impact of its interventionist programs.

Although the RCCG has contributed to education, health services and other empowerment programs, it has not achieved much with regard to social justice. This is because the rate of social injustice in the country is alarming and needs the prophetic voice of the church. Social justice is part of Jesus’ ministry, and since the RCCG is committed to a holistic diakonia-pneumatic approach to the well-being of the whole person ([Anderson 2020](#), pp. 121–36; [Adedibu 2019](#), pp. 182–204; [Shaull and Cesar 2000](#), pp. 214, 227) RCCG should extend its tentacles to social justice just as it has recently created a directorate of politics and governance. This is imperative as the spiritual and physical aspects of life are inseparable from each other in this perspective ([Clarke 2015](#), p. 164).

Although the RCCG has continued to intervene in critical areas of development, it is important that it does not appear to be profit-driven. However, many critics have not fully considered the immense resources required to develop and maintain the various facilities established by the church. Their criticism centers around supposed profits apparently accruable to the church ([Ukah 2020](#), pp. 430–59). Nevertheless, the church should creatively address this perception.

However, RCCG’s attention to ecological challenges is raising some concern in the public. As it develops and establishes facilities, critical attention should be paid to this in order to ensure a sustainable healthy environment ([Maseno and Mamati 2021](#), pp. 1–7).

6. Conclusions

The role of faith communities in development, particularly Nigerian Pentecostal megachurches such as RCCG, is largely based on their diakonia services which are shaped on their theological subscription of alleviating socio-economic challenges of those in the margin of life. The altruistic approaches of faith communities such as RCCG to development defies a secular developmental framework but relies on initiating several developmental ‘wings’ from a pneuma-diaconal perspective. The article argued that the nexus between religion and development is a major contribution to development especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Nigerian megachurches are not only measured in terms of their grandiose edifices,

but also their diakonia services over time as reflected in their social responsiveness to the socio-economic, health and educational inadequacies caused by the systemic and endemic corruption of the ruling class.

RCCG is one of several Nigerian megachurches that are reshaping “the very notions of development based on their religious worldviews and their situated knowledge due to the embeddedness in local contexts and cultures” (Öhlmann et al. 2020, p. 2). This article demonstrated that there is a considerable and increasing dynamism in the contributions of RCCG to the development of various communities. In view of the fact that most Nigerian Pentecostal megachurches are “autochthonous social and institutional structures,” they are well-positioned to achieve development through their credibility (Öhlmann et al. 2020, p. 13). This is particularly the case in most African countries such as Nigeria where institutional failure has provided ample ground for pneumatic and diaconal intervention.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- Adeboye, Enoch Adejare. 2015. *Why We Focus on Corporate Social Responsibility: The Good Samaritan*. Lagos: A Publication of the CSR Department of the RCCG, pp. 1–8.
- Adeboye, Olufunke. 2020. A Starving man cannot shout halleluyah. In *African Initiated Christianity and the Decolonization of Development*. Edited by Philip Öhlmann, Wilhelm Gräb Grab and Marie-Luise Frost. New York: Routledge, pp. 115–35.
- Adedibu, Babatunde. 2016. The Missional history and growth of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in the United Kingdom till date. *Journal of European Pentecostal Theological Association* 36: 80–93. [CrossRef]
- Adedibu, Babatunde. 2017. History of the Redeemed Christian Bible College. In *Pastor E.A. Adeboye, His Life and Calling: Ibadan, Nigeria*. Edited by Micheal Omolewa, Johnson Odesola, Olaitan Olubiyi and Jide Oshuntokun. Ibadan: Bookcraft Africa, pp. 173–80.
- Adedibu, Babatunde. 2018. The changing faces of African Independent Churches as development actors across borders. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74: 4740. [CrossRef]
- Adedibu, Babatunde. 2019. A Call for the awakening of the Prophetic Voice of African Neo–Pentecostals. In *The Mighty Transformer: The Holy Spirit Advocates for Social Justice*. Edited by Antipas L. Harris. Irving: GIELD Academic Press, pp. 182–204.
- Adedibu, Babatunde. 2020. Approaches towards Transformation and Development. In *African Initiated Christianity and the Decolonization of Development*. Edited by Philip Öhlmann, Wilhelm Grab and Marie-Luise Frost. New York: Routledge, pp. 136–50.
- Adedibu, Babatunde. 2021. Sustainable Development in Nigeria: The Interventionist Approaches of Healthcare Delivery of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Redemption Camp, Mowe, Ogun State, Nigeria. In *Nigerian Pentecostalism and Christian Social Responsibility*. Edited by Babatunde Adedibu, Benson Igboin, Alaba Oti and Isaac Aiyegboin. Glienicke: Gerlag Velag, pp. 103–24.
- Adelakun, Abimbola. 2021. *Performing Power in Nigeria: Identity, Politics, and Pentecostalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Adeyemo, Adeolu. 2022. NUC Ranks Redeemer’s Varsity as 2nd Overall Best in Nigeria. Available online: <https://tribuneonline.ng.com/nuc-ranks-redeemers-varsity-as-2nd-overall-best-in-nigeria/> (accessed on 25 August 2022).
- Adeyewa, Debo. 2015. Vice-Chancellor’s Speech Delivered at the Sixth (6th) Convocation of the Redeemer’s University on Thursday 8th January, University Auditorium, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria. Available online: <https://run.edu.ng/directory/oermedia/11561929995664.pdf> (accessed on 22 February 2022).
- Adogame, Afe. 2013. *The African Christian Diaspora: New Currents and Emerging Trends*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Adogame, Afe. 2016. African Christianities and The Politics of Development From Below. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72: 4065. [CrossRef]
- Akhazemea, Daniel, and Babatunde Adedibu. 2011. The Redeemed Christian Church of God, a Missionary Global Player: What Is Her Message Regarding Human Development? In *Encounter Beyond Routine*. NR. 5 Dokumentation. Hamburg: Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland e.V., pp. 53–64.
- Anderson, Allan. 2020. Pentecostalism and Social, Political and Economic Development. *Spiritus* 5: 21–136. [CrossRef]
- Asamoah-Gyadu, Kwabena J. 2019. God is Big in Africa: Pentecostal Mega Churches and a Changing Religious Landscape. *Material Religion* 15: 390–92. [CrossRef]
- Balia, Daryl M., and Kirsteen Kim, eds. 2010. *Edinburgh 2010 Volume II: Witnessing to Christ Today*. Oxford: Regnum Books International, pp. 4, 31.

- Basedau, Mathias, Simone Gobien, and Sebastian Prediger. 2018. The multidimensional Effects of Religion on Socioeconomic Development: A Review of the Empirical Literature. *Journal of Economic Surveys* 32: 1106–33. [CrossRef]
- Bernstein, Ann, and Stephen Rule. 2010. Flying under South Africa's Radar the Growth and Impact of Pentecostals in a Developing Country. In *the Hidden Form of Capital: Spiritual Influences in Societal Progress*. Edited by Peter L. Berger and Gordon Redding. Delhi: Anthem Press.
- Bompani, Barbara. 2008. African Independent Churches in Post-Apartheid South Africa: New Political Interpretations. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34: 665–77. [CrossRef]
- Bompani, Barbara. 2015. Religion and Development in Sub-Saharan. In *The Routledge Handbook of Religions and Global Development*. London: Routledge Publishers, p. 106.
- Bowers Du Toit, Nadine. 2020. Contested development(s)? The possible contribution of the African Independent Churches in decolonizing development: A South African Perspective. In *African Initiated Christianity and the Decolonization of Development*. Edited by Philip Ohlmann, Wilhelm Grab and Marie-Luise Frost. New York: Routledge, pp. 311–21.
- Burgess, Richard. 2009. African Pentecostal spirituality and civic engagement: The case of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Britain. *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 30: 255–73.
- Burgess, Richard. 2015. Pentecostals and Development in Nigeria and Zambia: Community Organising as a Response to Poverty and Violence. *PentecoStudies* 14: 176–204. [CrossRef]
- Burgess, Richard. 2020a. *Nigerian Pentecostalism and Development*. New York: Routledge.
- Burgess, Richard. 2020b. Megachurches and 'Reverse Mission'. In *Handbook on Megachurches*. Edited by Stephen Hunt. Leiden: Brill.
- Christ the Redeemer's College. 2022. Available online: <http://crcchristhill.com/hist.asp> (accessed on 21 February 2021).
- Clarke, Matthew. 2011. *Development and Religion: Theology and Practice*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Clarke, Matthew. 2015. Friend or Foe? Finding Common Ground between Development and Pentecostalism. *PentecoStudies* 14: 156–75. [CrossRef]
- Ekins, Paul, ed. 1986. *The Living Economy: A New Economics in the Making*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Freeman, Dena, ed. 2012. *Pentecostalism and Development: Churches, NGOs and Social Change in Africa*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Freeman, Dena. 2015. Pentecostalism and Economic Development in Sub-Saharan Africa. In *The Routledge Handbook of Religions and Global Development*. Edited by Emma Tomalin. London: Routledge, pp. 114–26.
- Fullman, Nancy, Jamal Yearwood, Solomon M. Abay, Cristiana Abbafati, Foad Abd-Allah, Jemal Abdela, Ahmed Abdelalim, Zegeye Abebe, Teshome Abuka Abebo, Victor Aboyans, and et al. 2018. Measuring Performance on healthcare Access and Quality Index for 195 countries and territories and selected subnational locations: A systematic analysis from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016. *The Lancet* 391: 2236–71. [CrossRef]
- His Love Foundation. 2021. The RCCG Charity, Partners. Available online: <https://hislovefoundation.com/partners/> (accessed on 25 February 2022).
- Hunt, Stephen, ed. 2020. *Handbook of Megachurches*. Leiden: Brill.
- Iluymade, Idowu. 2018. *Christian Social Responsibility: A Matter of Life and Death?* Lagos: RCCG.
- Kaag, Mayke, and Maud Saint-Lary. 2011. The New Visibility of Religion in Development Arena. *Bulletin de l'APAD* 33: 1. [CrossRef]
- Katsaura, Obvious. 2020. Pentecosmopolis: On the Pentecostal cosmopolitanism of Lagos. *Religions* 50: 504–28. [CrossRef]
- Klaasen, John. 2013. The interplay between theology and development: How theology can be related to development in Postmodern Society. *Missionalia* 41: 182–94. [CrossRef]
- Kuo, Evan. 2022. 8 Facts about Healthcare in Nigeria. Available online: <https://borgenproject.org/healthcare-in-nigeria/> (accessed on 22 February 2022).
- Malloch, Theodore. 2003. Social, Human and Spiritual Capital in Economic Development. *The Roosevelt Group* 24: 7–29.
- Manji, Frank, and Carl O'Coil. 2018. Ngos in Africa: A Tainted History. *New African*. March 15. Available online: <https://newafricanmagazine.com/16536/> (accessed on 8 November 2022).
- Maseno, Loreen, and King'asia Mamati. 2021. An appraisal of the Pentecostal eco-theology and environmental consciousness among youths in Parklands Baptist Church, Kenya. *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77: 6840. [CrossRef]
- McGrath, Alister E. 2007. *Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution—A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First*. New York: HarperCollins e-books.
- McRobie, Paul G. 1986. *Forward to From the Roots Up: Economic Development as if Community Mattered*. Edited by David Ross and Peter Usher. Croton-on-Hudson: The Bootstrap Press.
- Miller, Donald E. 2009. Progressive Pentecostalism: An Emergent Trend in Global Christianity. *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 30: 275–87.
- Miller, Donald E., and Tetsunao Yamamori. 2007. *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Montemaggi, Sara, and Francesca Eva. 2010. Misunderstanding Faith: When 'Capital' Does Not Fit the 'Spiritual'. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences* 5: 179–92. [CrossRef]
- Nnah, Mary. 2021. RCCG Donates 11 ICU Beds, Ventilators to Lagos, Ogun, Plateau. Available online: <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/03/31/covid-19-adeboye-donates-to-lagos-state/> (accessed on 25 August 2021).
- Obadan, Mike. 2010. The Years of Despondency. *NewsWatch Magazine*, October 4, Lagos: NewsWatch Communications Limited, 20.
- Obadare, Ebenezer. 2016. Raising righteous billionaires': The Prosperity gospel reconsidered. *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72: 2. [CrossRef]

- Obadare, Ebenezer. 2018. *Pentecostal Republic: Religion and the Struggle for the State*. London: Zed Books.
- Oguntola, Sunday. 2012. Fury over Mission School Fees. Available online: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/june/nigeria-fury-over-fees.html> (accessed on 22 February 2022).
- Öhlmann, Philipp, Gräb Wilhelm, and Marie-Luise Frost. 2020. Introduction. In *African Initiated Christianity and the Decolonization of Development*. New York: Routledge, pp. 1–30.
- Öhlmann, Philipp, Marie-Luise Frost, and Wilhelm Gräb. 2016. African Initiated Churches' potential as development actors. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72: 3825. [CrossRef]
- Öhlmann, Philipp, Stefan Hunglinger, Wilhelm Grab, and Marie-Luise Frost. 2018. *Religion and Sustainable Development: The 'Secular Distinction' in Development Policy and its Implication for Development*. Discussion Paper 03/2018. Berlin: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.
- Olawale, Gabriel. 2017. Our Mandate Is to Raise 200 Millionaire Farmers in 2017—RCCG Apapa. Available online: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/03/mandate-raise-200-millionaire-farmers-2017-rccg-apapa/> (accessed on 25 August 2022).
- Omotoye, Rotimi. 2006. Christianity and Educational Development, A Case Study of Christian Missionary Universities in Nigeria in the 21st Century. In *Religion, Governance and Development in the 21st Century: A Publication of the Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions*. Edited by Rasheed Ajani Raji and Adelumo Dopamu. Ilorin: Association for the Study of Religions (NASR), Ago Iwoye: Olabisi Onabanjo University, pp. 123–43.
- Palmer, David, and Michele Wong. 2013. Clarifying the Concept of Spiritual Capital. Paper presented at Conference on the Social Scientific Study of Religion, Hong Kong, China, July 10–13. Available online: <https://www.socsc.hku.hk/ExCEL3/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Concept-of-Spiritual-Capital.pdf> (accessed on 26 September 2022).
- Pierson, Paul E. 1989. Mission and community development: A historical perspective. In *Christian Relief and Development*. Edited by Edgar Elliston. Dallas: Word Publishing, p. 7.
- Putnam, Robert. 1993. The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life. *The American Prospect* 13: 36–42.
- Shaull, Richard, and Waldo Cesar. 2000. *Pentecostalism and the Future of the Christian Churches: Promises, Limitations, Challenges*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Stohr, Walter B., and Fraser Taylor, eds. 1981. *Development from Above or Below? The Dialectics of Regional Planning in Developing Countries*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.
- Swart, Ignatus, and Elsabé Nell. 2016. Religion and Development: The Rise of a Bibliography. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72: 1–27. [CrossRef]
- Ter Haar, Gerrie. 2011. *Religion and Development: Ways of Transforming the World*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ter Haar, Gerrie, and Stephen Ellis. 2006. The Role of Religion in Development: Towards a New Relationship between the European Union and Africa. *The European Journal of Development Research* 18: 351–67. [CrossRef]
- The Nation. 2022. RCCG Donates 11 ICU Beds, Ventilators to Lagos, Ogun, Plateau [States]. Available online: <https://thenationonline.net/rccg-donates-11-icu-beds-ventilators-to-lagos-ogun-plateau/amp/> (accessed on 24 February 2022).
- Tomalin, Emma. 2015. Introduction. In *The Routledge Handbook of Religions and Global Development*. Edited by Emma Tomalin. London: Routledge.
- Ukah, Asonzeh. 2009. Reverse Mission or Asylum Christianity? A Nigerian Church in Europe. In *Africans and the Politics of Popular Culture*. Edited by Toyin Falola and Augustine Agwuode. Rochester: Rochester University Press, pp. 104–32.
- Ukah, Asonzeh. 2013. Prophets for profit: Pentecostal authority and fiscal accountability among Nigerian churches in South Africa. In *Alternative Voices: A Plurality Approach for Religious Studies*. Edited by Afe Adogame, Magnus Ehtler and Oliver Freiberger. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, pp. 134–59.
- Ukah, Asonzeh. 2020. Prosperity, Prophecy and the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Healing Economy of African Pentecostalism. *Pneuma* 42: 430–59. [CrossRef]
- White, Peter. 2015. Religion, Mission and National Development: A Contextual Interpretation of Jeremiah 29: 4–7 in the Light of the Activities of the Basel Mission Society in Ghana (1828–1918) and its missiological implications. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36: 1419. [CrossRef]
- White, Peter. 2018. Pentecostal Pneumatology in Ghanaian Christian Mission. *Trinity Journal of church and Theology* 19: 126–41.
- White, Peter. 2020. Religion, culture, and development: The pneuma-diaconal perspective of African Pentecostalism. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 6: 459–78. [CrossRef]
- Yong, Amos. 2012. A typology of prosperity theology: A religious economy of the global renewal or a renewal economics? In *Pentecostalism and Prosperity: The Socioeconomics of the Global Charismatic Movement*. Edited by Katherine Attanasi and Amos Yong. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.